

## Summary:

FemHarry. What if Hilda Potter ran away from her relatives at the age of five, having had enough, and disappeared from the Ministry's sights ever since? Now, seven years later, the Girl-Who-Lived is back, yet she is more dangerous, and she seemed to have her own plans. Cedric/FemHarry. Semi-dark fic. Siding with Voldemort. Fake Prophecy. Dumbledore and Weasley bashing.

Many people have been asking me to start this story, so here it is. I've never written a Harry Potter fic before, so please pardon me if it doesn't go over well or if it seems a little strange. Also, I'm quite aware that grammar isn't exactly my strongest point in English, and I've also quite given up on having a beta reader as the last one that I have took a hell of a time to get back to me, so my suggestion is this: if you spotted any grammar errors or mistakes in this story, let me know via a review or a PM, preferably the former.

Also, this story will be quite AU. It's in my personal opinion that how a child will act will be what they've gone through in life, and Hilda (Harry) will be quite OOC in this story, and probably a few others as well. I've never really liked canon Harry from book five onwards (no offense to JK Rowling!), and I'll be amending quite a few things. And I've never really liked Dumbledore and some of the Weasleys save for the twins, Bill and Charlie, and all the discrimination towards light and dark, and thus, Hilda will probably be on neutral ground until something major in this story really happens.

There will be quite a few OCs who will have a major part to play in the upbringing of Hilda, and they're not exactly human either. Also, I've always liked Cedric, and this will be a Hilda/Cedric pairing, though they will start off as friends before romance blooms during Hilda's third or fourth year. Cedric's parents never really showed up much in the books, and I'm writing them based on what I remember from the books.

Disclaimer: I do not own Harry Potter or any of the characters, but the OC characters belongs to me

## Chapter One: Hilda Potter

Ethan Nightwing had never liked the forever ongoing fights between the non-humans and the wizards always taking place in their world.

He was the younger brother of the vampire High Prince of the Eastern vampire clan, and while he was not in line for the throne to lead his clan, he had a side to him that hates to let any injustice slide past him and ignore it like it's no business of his own. Even his older brother, the High Prince was quite amused by this side of his dear brother as it's not very vampire-like, and even Ethan admits it.

And as such, after the war which follows the Fall of the Dark Lord, the non-human clans have scattered all over the world, hiding themselves away from the prying eyes of humans – Muggle and wizard-like, and this includes the vampires as well.

The non-human clans which in particular include the vampire, the shape shifter and the werewolf clans have never really held great love for the Ministry of Magic which seemed to make it their mission in life to make their lives miserable. Treatment towards the non-humans especially grew worse after the war in which they were practically hunted down by wizards.

Ethan's mind, however, was sharper than most to the extent when his brother often asked him for his advice and help. He could see past the cloud of hatred and vengeance which often clouded the minds of his fellow clan members and vampires. And he could see that this was merely the work of a few narrow-minded individuals within the Ministry.

Unlike most of the non-humans, Ethan himself had several friends in the Ministry itself whom he had saved from quite a few tight pinches during the war and several times in the past, and they owed him some high favours. And as such, they were probably the only reason why vampire hunting had been almost non-existent for several years after the war. Unfortunately, that isn't the case for the other non-humans.

With the end of the war, Ethan had taken to travelling, having had enough of the bloodshed and numerous killings that he'd seen during the war, and fortunately, his older brother had always been fond of him, and had agreed to his request.

And this is why one Ethan Nightwing somehow found himself in a Muggle town in Great Britain, with said town being named 'Privet Drive'.

Ethan tried to ignore all the stares at him as he walked down the streets of Privet Drive. As a vampire, he was extremely good-looking with raven-black hair that reaches the nape of his neck which frames his face perfectly and crimson red eyes. And despite being nearly two hundred years old, he stills looks to be around eighteen or nineteen years of age, appearance-wise.

And it was whilst Ethan was passing by the neighbourhood park when his vampire hearing caught the sounds of light sobbing. And it wasn't the frightened kind of sobbing as well. It was more like the owner of that voice was lonely, and the voice belongs to a child.

And if there is one great weakness that Ethan is known for, it is that he can't seem to leave a child in trouble behind. Ethan's brother was often exasperated with him for this, and had wondered more than once if Ethan wasn't born in the wrong body as his behaviour and mannerisms...isn't very vampire-like.

The sun was setting quickly as Ethan made his way into the park to track down the owner of the voice that he'd heard. Unlike contrary belief, vampires can come out into the sun. Most of them just never did as even though they won't shrivel up and die in the sun, the sunlight had an annoying tendency to weaken their powers. Vampire magic and powers work best in the dark and in the moon, not the sun. And as such, most vampires never venture out in broad daylight.

Ethan traced down the source of the crying to behind the slide where a small raven-haired girl was crying her eyes out, her small and thin arms wrapped around her knees. She was dressed in an oversized white shirt several sizes too big for her with blue pants that seemed too big for her slender frame. As Ethan approached her, the girl looked up with her mesmerizing green eyes, and Ethan's eyes widened a slight fraction as he noticed the lightning bolt scar on her forehead and knew who she was immediately.

No one in the magical world – human or non-human otherwise won't know who this child is. Their supposed 'saviour' from the Dark Lord Voldemort.

Ethan frowned as he studied the crying child. As far as he recalls – and he had a parrot memory – the Girl-Who-Lived should be five

years of age this year, but this child before him looks to be around three or four, yet was smaller than the average child. And Ethan was perceptive enough to note her clothes, and was smart enough to put two and two together to piece together just what had happened, and the conclusion had him seething in anger.

Some of his human friends at the Ministry had told him that the supposed 'great leader of the Light' Albus Dumbledore had taken it upon himself to hide the Girl-Who-Lived away by placing her with her Muggle relatives just after the war had ended. Ethan was never a great fan of Dumbledore as he and his clan which includes his brother and father have faced Dumbledore's manipulations more than once, and the wizard had come close to being a midnight snack for most of the clan had he not wizened up that threats and bribes aren't exactly the best way to give him the support of the Eastern vampire clan.

"Who are you?" asked the girl, sniffing, rubbing at her eyes.

Ethan put on the nicest smile that he could before kneeling down to her height. "I'm Ethan," he said gently, trying not to scare the girl. "Ethan Nightwing. Child. What is your name?"

The girl looked suspiciously at Ethan, studying him for several moments before she answered. "Hilda," she said. "Hilda Potter."

Ethan sighed inwardly. His suspicions were accurate. And judging by the girl's behaviour, appearance and judging by the fact that her clothes were practically hanging off her, she was probably a victim of domestic child abuse. This kind of thing is not taken kindly to in the magical world as wizardry families were small enough as it is, and even the non-humans protected their children with ferocity until they were old enough to fend on their own. The vampires, especially, were especially protective of their young. Ethan knew that if his brother or any vampire caught wind of this, they would be less than pleased. Human or not, no vampire would tolerate abuse that is being done to a child.

"I see. Hilda, is it? Nice name," said Ethan, placing one hand onto the top of Hilda's head, and the girl flinched back a little as if she was half-afraid that Ethan would lash out at her all of a sudden. Ethan frowned slightly as his vampire sight caught sight of the faint bruising that could be faintly seen along Hilda's neckline as well as

the unmistakable imprint of four fingers and a thumb around her left wrist, a fair contrast to her pale porcelain-like skin. "Hilda. Who did that to you?" He gestured towards the bruising that he could see, and if Ethan had to take a wild guess, there'll be much more injuries on her body which is being hidden by her overly large clothes.

Hilda looked nearly frightened and tried to cover up her injuries as best as she could, and Ethan could nearly feel the fright and absolute terror emanating off this child before him who could not be older than five. "No one!" she said, fright and terror visible on her face. "I-I just fell!"

Ethan sighed at this extremely poor lie, not that anyone could lie to a vampire without them smelling the lie out. "Falls don't give you that kind of bruising," he said, indicating towards the hand imprint visible on Hilda's wrist, and she flinched. "And falls don't give you that kind of injuries which indicate that you were hit by something or someone." And he indicated towards the injury on Hilda's neckline.

"N-N-No one hit me!" Hilda was nearly hysterical. "Aunt Petunia and Uncle Vernon never laid a hand on me! I-I'm just a bad child!" She was nearly in tears, and Ethan thanked his stars that no one was around in the park, or he would have been pegged as a 'big bully'.

"So the ones who hit you were your uncle and aunt, were they?" said Ethan calmly, and Hilda looked absolutely terrified. "Relax, I'm not going to rat you out." Ethan smiled gently at the girl, and placed a hand atop her head. He then turned serious. "Hilda. I want you to tell me. How long has this been going on? I promise that I won't tell anyone. This will be just between the two of us."

Hilda looked suspiciously at Ethan. "Do you promise?" she asked, and Ethan nodded. "I-I don't know how long this has been going on. Nearly all my life, I suppose. And it isn't just them. M-My cousin Dudley too. T-They don't like me a lot. They said that I'm a bad child."

Ethan frowned. What kind of humans were those Muggles, treating a child like this? That does it.

"Hilda." Hilda stared back at Ethan curiously. "How would you like to come with me? To be away from your relatives? No child should

have to endure such abuse at the hands of those supposed to be caring for them."

Hilda looked back at Ethan, and was that hope that could be seen in her eyes?

"For real?"

Ethan laughed and nodded. "For real," he said. He stretched out a hand. "Would you like to come with me?"

Hilda took his hand.

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Eric Nightwing, the High Prince of the Eastern vampire clan and the older brother of one Ethan Nightwing was staring at his younger brother.

His younger brother, was in turn, staring back at him sheepishly, and a human girl who don't seem to be older than four or five years old was clinging to Ethan with a terrified look on her face as she stared at Eric.

Eric looks a lot like his brother, only with slightly longer hair, and his crimson orbs have a darker shade to it, and he was dressed in clothes which identify him as the High Prince of the Eastern vampire clan.

Eric was expecting quite a lot of things when his younger brother had arrived back at their home in the Dark Forest which is the land of the Eastern vampire clan, but he didn't expect for his brother to bring a human child with him. And less of all, not the Girl-Who-Lived!

Eric groaned, wondering which celestial being he had offended to have this kind of situation on his hands.

"Ethan, you do know who this child is, don't you?" said Eric wearily, and Ethan nodded sheepishly. "And still, you've brought her here why? Do you really want a war between the non-humans and the humans to take place?"

Ethan frowned slightly, wondering how he's going to phrase it in a way so that his extremely protective and quite cool-headed older brother won't fly off the deep end when he caught wind how Hilda was being treated by her relatives. And people wondered where Ethan had gotten his protective tendency from...

On his way here, he had explained everything about the magical world and what he really is to Hilda. It took him a while to convince Hilda that magic was real, and that was only when he flew with Hilda in his arms halfway up a pine tree and made blue flames appear in his hand. He was actually half-expecting for Hilda to run screaming from him, screaming 'monster' or something, but to his utmost disbelief, the child didn't, but clung tighter to him as he ran at vampire speed through the Dark Forest which was actually hidden by ancient vampire magic to protect their home and the whereabouts of it from being discovered by the wizards.

"I can't help it, Eric!" said Ethan aggressively, and Eric stared at his younger brother. "Her Muggle relatives were abusing her!" Hilda flinched back at Ethan's angry voice. No one liked it when Ethan was angry as his voice made it seem as if a storm is about to break out.

Eric stared at Ethan for a long while without speaking. "What do you mean?" he asked at last.

Ethan sighed and showed his brother the injuries on Hilda's body, and the girl flinched slightly and clung to Ethan tightly as Eric scowled and the red of his eyes darkened even further if it's even possible. Abused children – vampire or not – struck a nerve in Eric.

"And you've brought her here because?" Eric said warily. He knew his brother, and had half an idea as to what crazy idea was currently running through his brother's head.

"To maybe take her in and make her my ward?" Ethan suggested unsurely.

Eric nearly groaned. "Just what are you thinking, Ethan?" Eric asked, exasperated. "What is running through that head of yours? Do you seriously think that Father will even accept this? We've lived in isolation away from the wizards for a reason! And do you seriously want them to wage war against us for 'kidnapping their saviour'?"

"If we perform the blood ritual, we can change her heritage and destroy the magic in that scar of hers," said Ethan stubbornly, glancing at the lightning bolt scar on Hilda's forehead before turning back to his bewildered older brother. "If the wizards will turn a blind eye to one of their own being abused like this, then I can't ignore this! No child should have to go through what she did!"

Eric stared at Ethan for a long time before he looked back at the half-scared child currently clinging to his brother before looking back at his brother and sighing. "I'll go and get Father," he said at last. "Go and wait in the Great Hall. I doubt that he will be pleased though."

Ethan nodded before his brother turned, his cloak swishing behind him as he headed to a part of the castle to get the High Lord. Ethan then took Hilda by the hand before heading towards the Great Hall which is really like a dining room of sorts with long tables and carpeted grounds with chandeliers and a high chair for the High Lord at the end of the room. It's been a while since Ethan had returned home, and he highly doubt that his father will be pleased by this decision.

Soon, Ethan sensed the presences of his father and brother fast approaching the Great Hall where he's currently in, and he turned towards the great ivory doors of the Great Hall as it swung opened, and his father stormed in with his brother close on his heels, a displeased expression on his face.

"Father," said Ethan before crossing his right arm over his chest to greet his father in vampire greeting.

"Ethan." His father – Elton Nightwing greeted coldly with a curt nod. "While I would like to say 'welcome home', your brother has brought me some news that I'm far from pleased with." He glanced to Hilda who is clutching at Ethan's hand and he turned his attention back to his younger son. "What's this that I hear from Eric about you wanting to take in a human child as your ward? And the Girl-Who-Lived of all people!"

"Her guardians are abusing her, Father!" Ethan cut in before his father could continue on his tirade. And by the way that his father's eyes widened in horror told Ethan that his brother probably didn't



managed to tell him that before Elton had headed off in search of Ethan. "I can't just ignore it! If I left her there, she would probably wind up dead in a few years! Or worse, she might even pull another Dark Lord once she's old enough!"

Elton turned his piercing gaze towards Hilda who shifted uncomfortably on one foot to another as Elton studied her from head to toe, taking in all the injuries on her person as Hilda tried hard to tug onto the sleeve of her oversized shirt to hide the injuries on her arms, but to no avail.

Elton sighed and turned back to his younger son. "While I can't say that I don't understand your reasoning, she's still a human child," he said patiently. "She'll be literally snack for the other vampires who can't control their bloodlust as well as we could. Furthermore, don't you think that the Ministry of Magic will launch a manhunt for their 'saviour'?"

"That's what I'm going to talk to you about, Father," said Ethan, calming down some once he'd seen that his father had calmed down. "What do you say if we...perform the blood ritual? That way, it will erase all traces of her original heritage from the Potter line, and secondly, it'll also destroy the magic in that scar of hers. And finally, she'll be kind of...part vampire, and she'll also have our protection, and the other vampires will know better than to touch her. And if need arises, I'll take her away with me and raise her and only come back to visit during the Samhain festivals or something." He said hastily.

Elton said nothing for a long while, studying Hilda, making the girl nervous. Eric and Ethan exchanged nervous glances as they looked at their silent father. The blood ritual that Ethan had talked about is a type of ancient vampire magic. But it is mostly used among the ancient vampire clans to 'adopt' a vampire into their clan to carry their blood so that they'll be able to carry on the line and heritage of their adopted clan. Never before had this ritual been used on a human. But if used on a human, said human will be able to gain the ability to use vampire magic – a much stronger type of magic than the type of magic that the wizards used, and the human will also awaken their own innate abilities. Also, they'll be protected by the magic of the blood ritual so that no other vampire will feed on them.

Elton finally sighed before walking towards Hilda and Ethan and kneeling down to Hilda's eye level, and the girl flinched back a little. Elton smiled a kind grandfatherly smile at Hilda, placing one hand on Hilda's head.

"Tell me, child," he said gently. "Hilda Potter, is it? If the Nightwing clan, the ruler of the Eastern vampire lands takes you into our clan, would you turn against us one day?"

Hilda looked at Elton like he had just spoken in Greek. "Why would I do that?" she asked, pure confusion in her voice. "You never did anything to me. If there is anyone that I would fear...it's my relatives."

All three vampires present could sense the truth in her words, and Elton smiled a small smile. He can see why his son is so adamant on taking this child into their clan and adopting her. He's starting to like this child himself, despite his severe dislike and distrust of humans especially after that fool of a wizard by the name of Albus Dumbledore tried to manipulate him during the last war to 'help the Light'.

"Tell me, child," said Elton quietly, and Ethan and Eric both stayed silent. "If we adopt you into our clan and give you our protection, would you turn against us one day once you've returned to your own kind should a war break out? Or would you protect the ones who have protected you during your childhood, and fight against your own kind?"

"I may be young, sir, but I'm not an ingrate," said Hilda quietly, meeting Elton's eyes. "I don't bite the hand that protects me. If you want me to state the ones that are truly evil, it's the humans themselves. But like it or not, Dark and Light can't live without each other as they are merely different sides of the same coin."

Elton smiled before standing up, his mind made up. He then turned towards Eric. "Eric, go and prepare the ritual room as well as the things that we require for the blood ritual," he instructed, and Eric nodded before disappearing in a wisp of black smoke. He then turned towards Ethan before sighing. "I might be making a mistake here, but I'll take her into our clan. But you might have to raise her away from the Dark Forest. The ways that we brought up our

young...shouldn't be implanted on a human child. You understand that, don't you, Ethan?"

"Yes Father," said Ethan quietly.

Elton smiled. "That overprotective tendency of yours..." he muttered. "I wonder where you even got it from. Raising a human child is not easy, you realise that, don't you?"

"Yes Father."

"I'll get the ritual started up," said Elton. "Head to the ritual room. And after the blood ritual, you're going to have to teach her how to control her magic, especially because within her veins flows both wizard and vampire magic. And if she don't control her magic, it will be disastrous."

"Father. Thank you."

Elton sighed. "Your mother would have done the same thing if she was still alive," he muttered. "Don't make me regret this decision, Ethan."

"I won't."

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Four Years Later  
Knockturn Alley

"This is the place?" grunted Severus Snape, looking up at the ivory signboard hanging above this inn-cum-bar which had the words 'Starlight's Hall' written on it in cursive writing with the designs of what seemed like a meteor shower on the signboard itself.

The windows of the inn-cum-bar that he was currently standing outside of in Knockturn Alley was tinted to prevent anyone from seeing inside, but from what he could see of the outside, it seemed rather spacious and well to do, and every now and then, Severus could see the occasional customer walking in and out of the bar, and he had been around long enough to tell that the majority of them are definitely not human.

"That's right," said Lucius Malfoy from beside him, nodding. "This place was set up about three years back. It was specifically for the non-humans – the vampires, the werewolves, the goblins and so on. That's why it's based in Knockturn Alley. But it's quite popular, even among the wizards. Though the wizards that come here are usually...people like us."

Severus grunted at this. 'People like us' meant wizards who are rumoured to be members of Dark families, or were involved in the circle of the Dark Lord during the war. Lucius had been going on and on about this bar for months now, and how the rumours at the Ministry went about that the owner of this bar isn't exactly human himself. But even Severus can't deny that werewolf attacks have declined considerably ever since this bar was set up. And according to Lucius, all kinds of charms and spells were placed on this place so that wizards can't Apparate in and out of this place. And those spells aren't the wizard kind.

Starlight's Hall was a major hit with the goblins of Gringotts as well, as even the goblins need a place to unwind. And Severus and Lucius really wanted to find a place where they could relax without that dreadful feeling of having someone whisper not far from them that they're involved with the Dark Lord. Well, that 'someone' isn't exactly wrong, but still...

"Shall we go in?" asked Lucius, glancing at Severus. "I promised Narcissa that I'll be home early tonight. And if all goes well, we might have even found a place where we could relax at last."

"After you," grunted Severus, and Lucius smirked before opening the oak door with tinted glass set in it, and a bell tinkled somewhere in the bar as both men stepped in, and soft soothing music could be heard coming from somewhere in the bar.

Severus was pretty impressed by the layout of the place as he stepped in, and he knew that his friend is too. The place is even bigger than it looks from the outside, and it even had a staircase heading upstairs to what Severus assumed must be in the inn rooms. A bar counter was at the front of the bar, and there was an assortment of drinks in the shelves set against the wall. A raven-haired young man who doesn't look to be much older than twenty-three was busy mixing some drinks together. A dark room covered with a curtain could be seen behind the counter which Severus

guessed must lead to the kitchen or something. A large tree tapestry with several leaves painted on it was set against the wall not far from the bar counter, and several numbers were on the leaves, and a few numbers were glowing red for some reason.

A couple of tables were occupied with goblins chatting after a hard day of work, and Severus could have sworn that the occupants of a corner table were vampires. Not a single occupant in the bar was covering their faces or something which is something that Severus will find in a place like the Three Broomsticks. Severus could see why Lucius wanted to visit this place so much. A couple of house elves were running around, delivering food and drinks to their customers, and a few were taking orders. All were dressed in the standard tea-towels that every house elf seemed to wear, but they even have a mini dark blue apron tied over their tea-towels with the words 'Starlight's Hall' written on it in white.

"Welcome!" said the young man as Severus and Lucius both settled into seats at the bar counter at the front of the bar. "What can I get you?"

"Erm..." Severus blinked as a menu appeared with a light 'pop' before him, and he took it in his hands, reading it carefully. Beside him, Lucius was doing the same. There were pictures of the drinks and food on the menu as well, and Severus suddenly found himself wanting to try them all as it all looked so appetizing. "One Odin's Apple for me. And may I have your..." Severus paused as he studied the picture of one of the menu meals. "...Blue Enquita?"

"Same here for me, thank you," said Lucius politely, and the young man nodded.

"Two Odin's Apples and two Blue Enquitas coming right up!" said the young man before the menus in both their hands disappeared with a light 'pop'. "I'm Ethan. Ethan Nightwing. I've never really seen you two around here before. First visit here?"

"Kind of," said Lucius with a smile. "I worked at the Ministry, and I've heard about this place from some of my colleagues, and I thought that I would like to take a look at it for myself. It's...a refreshing change from all the bars that I've went to with Severus here."

Ethan blinked before studying the two men before him before smiling. "Let me guess: you've been discriminated against in other bars?" he guessed, and Severus and Lucius blinked. "Most wizards who come here usually have the same problem that you do. That's why I set up Starlight's Hall in the first place. Not only to help my niece."

Lucius and Severus blinked simultaneously. "Your niece?" They echoed together.

Before Ethan could say anything, two drinks and the meals that they've ordered were placed before them just then, and Severus looked up to see a raven-haired girl with blue-red eyes who don't look to be older than nine years old standing before them, wearing a white long sleeved shirt with a black shirt worn over it and black jeans with blue and white sneakers.

"Thank you for waiting," said the girl with a small smile. "Here are your orders."

"Thank you," said Lucius, inclining his head to the girl politely as a gentleman would a lady, and Severus did the same next to him. "I'm digging in."

Lucius and Severus then dug into their meals which were extremely delicious, and they listened with slight smiles on their faces as the girl and Ethan exchanged small talk, with the latter cracking the occasional joke. The Malfoy head can't help but like this girl despite barely exchanging a few words with her, and thought about introducing his son to her who is around her age, thinking that it might help Draco to get out of that shell of his. Severus who doesn't usually like children seemed to like the girl as well.

The slight dragging of chairs against the smooth oak floor of the bar caused the three men and one girl to turn around just then only to see a man with a cloak on with the hood over his head, concealing his face standing up and leaving Starlight's Hall. Ethan and his niece exchanged glances before the girl looked at the departing back of the man as he left the bar, the bell tinkling as the door swung shut once more.

"Ethan?"

Ethan sighed. "Go," he said as if this was a common occurrence, and then again, it probably is. "But minimize collateral damage please. I don't want to have to repair the bar again. And take Lyra with you."

Lyra turned out to be a female house elf who appeared with a crack next to the girl the moment that Ethan had called her name.

"Okay," said the girl, nodding before leaving the bar with the house elf close to her heels.

Severus's eyes widened a slight fraction as he could have sworn that he saw a slight image of Lily Potter when she was a child overlapping with the niece of the owner of Starlight's Hall. But how could it be?

Lily Potter's only child disappeared four years ago, presumed dead. He could still remember when Arabella Figg had contacted Dumbledore four years ago, panicked, when she reported that the girl hadn't been seen for over a week, and Severus had to prevent himself from hexing the dumb Squib on the spot. How could she wait for over a week before contacting them? Now, Severus Snape isn't exactly the nicest man in the world, but even he had a soft spot for small children.

Dumbledore had contacted the Order of Phoenix – a group that he's put together during the war to fight Voldemort, but Hilda Potter can't be found anywhere, and even the Ministry was brought in. And even now, after four years, no one had found any trace of the girl. The Dursleys were frightened when a group of wizards have paid them a visit four years ago – with Dumbledore and Severus among them, and all that they could get out of them was that the girl had run off after a beating by Vernon Dursley and had never returned.

And even to this day, the entire magical community had been in search of the Girl-Who-Lived. Even Fawkes, Dumbledore's phoenix couldn't manage to find the girl which could only mean one of two things: either she's dead or her magical signature had changed so much that even the phoenix can't locate her.

'Could she be...?' Severus thought to himself, staring at the door which the girl had just headed out of. 'Lily's child?'

In an alley in Knockturn Alley not too far away from Starlight's Hall, the hooded man suddenly found that he couldn't seem to move and toppled to the ground, his hood being thrown back at this, and he looked up as he saw the niece of the owner of Starlight's Hall with a house elf tagging along with her standing before him.

The girl had a cold look on her face which shouldn't even be seen on the face of a child this young, and she had her left hand held out which was glowing blue slightly. The house elf next to her even had a slight sneer on her face.

The girl sighed. "I knew it," she said coldly, her red-blue eyes boring into him. "Mundungus Fletcher. And I know for sure that Ethan had told you six months ago that you and your group are not welcome into Starlight's Hall! What are you doing back here? Spying on us?"

Mundungus gulped nervously. This girl gives off a vibe of danger...

"N-No... Just for a drink..."

The girl snorted. "A drink when you didn't even order anything?" she said, deadpanned. "Who are you trying to fool?" Her eyes hardened. "Did Dumbledore send you?"

"I..."

"I'll give you until the count of three to tell me what your purpose is, or I'll deal with you my own way."

"I..."

"Three."

"N-Now, don't be hasty. I—"

"Two."

"I'm just—"

"One."

"Shit."



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Meanwhile, in Starlight's Hall, Lucius Malfoy and Severus Snape have both been getting on like a house on fire with Ethan Nightwing, and both liked him, finding it refreshing, compared to most of the people whom they met in their daily lives who were either so fake that it's nearly sickening or downright despise them for having connections with the 'Dark'.

"You're not really human, are you?" asked Severus. "I know that I've heard that name 'Nightwing' somewhere."

Ethan laughed. "Very perceptive," he said. "You're right, I'm not really human. I'm a vampire. I'm the younger son of the High Lord of the Eastern vampire clan."

Silence.

"You don't act...very vampire-like, if you must know," said Lucius at last.

Ethan laughed. "Everyone tells me that," he said. "Even my brother and father. I've left the vampire lands to raise my niece and to open this bar."

"Your niece..." said Severus slowly. "She's not a vampire, is she? I don't sense anything from her, save for the fact that her magic seems to be quite powerful."

"No, she's not," said Ethan with a slight shake of his head. "I...blood-adopted her." He didn't bother to go into further details, and both Lucius and Severus were wise enough to not ask further. "She's under the protection of the Eastern vampire clan, and technically, she's part of our clan now. I met her about four years ago in some human town. She was getting abused badly by her guardians, and I took her away from there as any later, and she might have died from the abuse."

Severus froze. It can't be...

"Because she had both vampire and wizard magic running within her veins, her magic is quite powerful. Even more so than the usual

wizard or witch. I've been training her to help teach her to control her magic."

"That man from earlier..." said Lucius slowly. "What is that all about?"

Ethan was silent before he answered. "He's probably one of the 'spies' from the 'Light' side. People like him come around here occasionally. Probably trying to find some 'evidence' to shut down Starlight's Hall or something. I don't know." Ethan shrugged. "Hilda usually deals with people like them. We don't welcome people who are supposedly from the 'Light' side around here. They discriminate against people and beings different from them far too much. It is because of people like them that I even set up this bar in the first place."

Severus and Lucius can't help nodding to this, though Severus was concerned as he heard the name of Ethan's niece. Hilda. The same name as his best friend's daughter who is currently missing, presumed dead.

"Ethan, your niece...what is her name?" asked Severus, trying to keep calm.

Ethan looked at Severus innocently, though his mind was in a whirl. Had Severus recognised Hilda despite her looks and magical signature changing as a result of the blood ritual done four years ago? As a result of the blood ritual, even the scar that identifies Hilda as the Girl-Who-Lived had vanished, thus severing the bond between Hilda and Voldemort permanently. That was only part of the reason why Ethan don't usually welcome people who are known to be extremely close with Albus Dumbledore, the number one wizard on Ethan's black list.

"Hilda Evans," said Ethan innocently. "Why?"

Severus growled low in his throat, running out of patience as he knew that the vampire was playing around with him. "Her real name, Ethan," he said.

That does it.

The playful banter came to an end, and Ethan studied the two wizards before him carefully. As a vampire, he could detect lies, and his gut feeling told him that he could trust those two, and Hilda seemed to like them as well, and the girl is an excellent judge of character. She is rarely wrong about people.

"Can I trust the both of you?" asked Ethan warily. "Will you swear that whatever you hear from me does not leave this place, and more importantly, does not reach the ears of the Ministry and Albus Dumbledore?"

Severus and Lucius exchanged bewildered looks before turning back towards Ethan before nodding. "You can trust us," said Lucius.

Ethan sighed. "If you knew her real name, you'll be pretty freaked out," he said. "I had to pull all kinds of strings as well as to use all kinds of vampire magic in order to hide her identity. Hilda...isn't exactly a fan of the Light, so you can trust her."

"Why?"

Ethan sighed. "Her first friend that she's made in her life after I met her goes by the name of Eve Nightwing. My cousin." He sighed. "She was the princess of the Northern vampire clan, but she was unfortunately killed about a year ago by someone working for Dumbledore just because she is a vampire. Before that, Hilda never really thought much about the Light, but after that, she simply snapped. She now hates them with a passion."

Severus studied Ethan carefully. "Her real name, Ethan," he said again.

Ethan sighed before speaking the two words that nearly gave Severus and Lucius cardiac arrest.

"Hilda Potter."

A/N: How's this for the first chapter? Good or bad? And what do you think about Ethan? Next chapter will have a first meeting with Draco, and possibly Hermione. And if anyone is wondering, yes, I'm going to make them both Hilda's best friends. Also, as for the House that Hilda is going to be sorted into, I'll leave it to the voting:

Ravenclaw

Slytherin

Anyway, I hope that you like this chapter, and please read and review!

Warnings: Dumbledore bashing. Weasley bashing. Siding with Voldemort fic.

Disclaimer: I do not own Harry Potter or any of the characters, but the OC characters belongs to me

## Chapter Two: First Friends

Starlight's Hall  
Knockturn Alley

"Excuse me?" Hilda Evans looked incredulously at Ethan as she was busy cleaning some wine glasses with a cloth. It was closing time for Starlight's Hall, and the house elves were cleaning the bar whilst Ethan and herself were cleaning some glasses and plates for the customers the next day.

Ethan Nightwing looked rather sheepish as he repeated his sentence. "I would like to invite Lucius and Severus to the Samhain festival held in another two weeks which will be held at the Dark Forest this year," he said. "Father and Eric would like to see two of my human friends, and I know that they can be trusted to hold their tongues about what actually happens during the Samhain festivals. And Lucius wanted to introduce you to his son. He mentioned something about telling his son about you, and that it's about time that his son had some friends his own age."

Hilda was silent as she resumed the cleaning of the glasses and plates. The meeting between them and Lucius Malfoy and Severus Snape was nearly four months back, and they have practically gotten on like a house on fire with the two men. The raven haired girl knew as well that Lucius had a son around her age, and the blonde man had mentioned that his son was extremely shy and quiet, and didn't have many friends – scratch that, he didn't have any friends.

The children of Lucius' friends were more interested in sucking up to the Malfoy heir which is something that Lucius' son could see from a mile away, and thus, the boy didn't have any friends his own age which is the reason why Lucius had wanted to introduce his son to her for months now. But every single time that he wanted to introduce his son to her, it's either that his son couldn't tag along with Lucius to Starlight's Hall, or Hilda happens to be away from the bar on some errand and couldn't manage to meet him. Hilda had

also met Narcissa Malfoy, Lucius' wife, and the blonde woman had taken a liking to Hilda and is quite fond of her.

Privately, Ethan had thought to himself that Lucius had something else in mind when he wanted to introduce his son to Hilda, but they were still too young for that! Or maybe Ethan is just thinking too much about things...

"Are you seriously sure that it's okay bringing humans to the Samhain festival?" asked Hilda at last. "It's the night when the bloodlust of all vampires were at their strongest. They'll be snack for them if they're not careful. Literally."

The Samhain festival is commonly known as the 'festival of the dead', held when the moon is at the highest in the sky, and every year on this day, vampires from all over would gather together to 'party' or something, and it also serves to know exactly who is the High Prince or Princess of the individual vampire clans. It is also the night when the powers of the vampires were at their strongest, and unfortunately, their bloodlust is at their strongest as well.

There are always humans at the Samhain festivals, but those humans are brought as 'meal' for the vampires to feed on. Very few humans are actually invited as guests to the festivals as the vampires like to keep their rituals quiet and known only among their own kind. So far, Hilda is the only human who knew the ways of the vampires' inside-out as she was brought up by one. Hilda had been to every single Samhain festival ever since Ethan had found her as it is the one festival that Ethan couldn't miss out on, but as technically, she was 'blood adopted' by the Eastern vampire clan, no vampire can touch her, and according to Ethan and Eric, her scent is 'dark' as well, like she's half-vampire or something, and thus, no vampire will feed on her.

"Father and Eric wanted to meet them," said Ethan with a shrug. "I think that they'll be alright as long as they stick close to my side. Like Eric and my father and the members of the other royal vampire clans, I can control my bloodlust pretty well. As long as they don't wander off by themselves, it should be alright."

Hilda sighed. "I don't know about that," she said hesitantly. "Only Lucius and Severus?"

"And Lucius' son." Ethan piped in.

Hilda sighed.

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Draco Malfoy looked around with wide gray eyes, all the while clutching at his father's hand tightly with his godfather standing on his other side. All three males were dressed in their finest robes so as to not offend the vampires who were normally known as a very proud race.

The surroundings were pretty impressive.

Ethan Nightwing, the vampire owner of the inn-cum-bar that his father had often brought him to in the hopes of introducing him to a new friend which had unfortunately failed each and every single time, had met Lucius, Draco and Severus at the entrance of some unknown village before he had taken them deep into the Dark Forest by the path that only the vampires can see before leading them to where the Samhain festival would be held.

The homes and territories of the vampires have always been kept hidden by some ancient vampire magic so that no human or wizard will be able to see or find it unless the vampires will it otherwise. It had been especially true after the war when the non-humans were practically hunted down by wizards.

Just over the treetops of the surrounding trees, Draco can see the distinct outline of a castle which his father had told him was the home of the Eastern vampire clan. Several trees were cleared out in this part of the forest that they were currently in, and it reminded Draco awfully of some campfire dance that he'd only seen out of fantasy books that he'd read when he was a little younger.

A gigantic bonfire was set up in the middle, and there were also four silvery-blue columns set up in each corner of this part of the forest that they were in, shining mysteriously in the moonlight, representing the power of the moon and the vampires. There were also a couple of humans mingling around. A few were the 'meal' for the vampires that night, but a few of the humans were dressed in formal robes which Draco knew represented their ranks as Potions Masters or Mistresses, and a few were even Master Sorcerers, Mind Walkers or

even Master Necromancers. In other words, highly-skilled wizards or witches who were well-associated with the powers of the dark and the moon.

The vampires were all gathering now, and Draco was a tad bit nervous as several vampires glanced at him hungrily, their crimson orbs shining in the glare of the fire and the moon before spotting Ethan with him and his father before looking away quickly.

"Ethan."

The adults all turned as High Lord Elton and High Prince Eric of the Eastern vampire clan approached Ethan, Lucius and Severus. Like Ethan, Elton and Eric were both dressed in black cloaks with silver clasps, and beneath it, they wore a long sleeved black shirt and black pants with boots made out of dragon hide, though there were silver markings to the cloaks of both Elton and Eric to signify their status, and Eric bore the mark of the Eastern vampire clan on his cloak to signify his status as a member of the royal vampire clan.

"Father." Ethan crossed his right arm over his chest as a form of greeting to his father before nodding to his brother. "Eric."

"Ethan." Eric nodded to his younger brother before a smile broke out on his face. "Welcome home." He then took glances around before turning back towards his brother. "Where's Hilda? I don't see her around. She's usually with you."

"She's at the lake," said Ethan. "Where she usually is during the Samhain festivals."

"I would like to see her though," said Elton thoughtfully. He then noticed Lucius and Severus before smiling a very small smile. "And who are these gentlemen?"

"They're my friends," said Ethan. "Misters Lucius Malfoy and Severus Snape."

"Ah yes. You've mentioned them more than once," said Elton, turning towards the two startled men and nodding to them. "It's a pleasure to meet you. My son has nothing but praises for you both. Welcome to the Samhain Festival."



"The pleasure's all mine," said Lucius, bowing politely to Elton to show his respect to the vampire High Lord. "Ethan has helped me and my friend out several times. It's an honour to be invited to the Samhain festival."

Eric laughed, and even Elton smiled slightly. The High Prince then glanced skywards before turning back towards his father. "Father. We should begin the festival soon. It's the witching hour."

"So it is," remarked Elton, glancing skywards at the moon before turning back to his son and his two wizard friends. "Ethan. Gentleman. I shall take your leave." He nodded to them. "May the Goddess watch your steps."

"And may she guide you in the shadows." Ethan replied, bowing slightly to his father before both his father and elder brother departed.

"So that's High Lord Elton," said Lucius as Elton and Eric departed. "I can see why he's the leader of one of the most influential and powerful vampire clans in existence. He's...fairly intimidating."

Ethan laughed. "Everyone who meets him for the first time says that," he said.

Severus then happened to glance around just then before freezing in shock and turning towards Lucius. "Lucius. Where's Draco?" he asked urgently.

Lucius' eyes widened in shock before glancing down at his side only to notice that his son was no longer by his side clutching at his robes which is what he had been doing several moments earlier. "Draco?" Lucius looked left and right, panic visible in his eyes. "Where is he? I told him not to leave my side!"

"Lucius, we have to find him quickly," said Ethan urgently whilst looking around as well. "If he wanders around without a vampire escort...he might very well get mistaken as 'snack'. We have to find him. Quickly."

Lucius and Severus both nodded before tagging after Ethan as they weaved in and out through the hordes of vampires gathered around,

listening to Elton's speech as he addresses the gathered vampires before the festival actually commences.

"...My friends. A new night has come. A new Samhain. Another night during which the shadows will roam the earth freely..."

Draco Malfoy was lost.

He had gotten bored as his father and godfather have both conversed deeply with the vampire High Lord and the High Prince and had wandered off by himself, forgetting his father's strict instructions to not leave his side unless he wants to be 'eaten'.

And now, he was truly and utterly lost, among some of the vampires who were listening to the speech of the vampire High Lord as he said something about Samhain and shadows which Draco do not understand. And as he was looking around for his father and godfather, he caught what the High Lord was saying:

"My friends. The time has come. The witching hour close approaches. The time when the powers of the dark and the moon of the vampires are at their strongest. We have all waited for this day. Now, my friends. Let the feast begin!"

Draco froze. Oh shit.

Even though he's currently only nine years old, he knew enough about the wizarding world and the vampires to know that 'feast' meant 'feeding on blood' in vampire language. And if he doesn't get out of here fast, he's going to be their meal.

Draco looked left and right frantically, searching for an escape route, but to no avail. As he was seriously about to convulse, he then felt a tug on his hand, and turned only to see a raven haired girl with red-blue eyes around his age standing behind him, wearing a white long sleeved shirt with a black shirt worn over it and black jeans with blue and white sneakers, and unlike most of the people currently present, she don't seem to be a vampire.

"Come." The girl instructed, keeping her voice low.

Draco stared. "You're..."

"Don't say anything," said the girl in a low voice. "Keep quiet and follow me."

Draco nodded meekly and followed the girl. What other choice does he have? If he doesn't listen to the girl, he will be treated as 'snack' by the other vampires.

The girl led him away from the site of the Samhain festival where the sounds and cheers grew softer until Draco could barely hear them, and it was then that the girl stopped, also releasing her hold on his hand. The night view in this part of the forest that the girl had brought him in was beautiful with the hundreds and billions of glittery stars in the velvety night sky, and a lake was even visible, with the reflection of the stars shining in the dark waters of the lake.

The girl sighed and turned towards Draco. "Are you Draco Malfoy? Lucius' Malfoy's son?" Draco nodded dumbly, wondering how in the name of Merlin did the girl know his name. "I'm Hilda. Hilda Evans. I guessed that your father did mention about me?"

Draco can only stare. So this is the girl that his father had wanted to introduce to him for months now. She doesn't seem at all like all the other girls that he'd met so far who only wanted to befriend him for his family's wealth and name.

"So...you're Hilda Evans?" he asked slowly. "N-Nice to meet you."

Hilda nodded. "Likewise," she said. She then sighed. "You shouldn't be wandering around the Samhain festival without a vampire escort. You would have died had one of the vampires lost control of their bloodlust and fed on you. Tonight is the night when their bloodlust is at their strongest."

Draco can only stare. "W-What?"

Hilda sighed. "Tonight is the Samhain festival," she explained. "The festival of the dead. You're lucky that I managed to get you away in time, or you would be snack for the vampires. Literally. It's also a time when the various vampire clans introduced their High Prince or Princess to the other vampires. Think of them as the future rulers of their individual clans. The position of High Prince or High Princess of a vampire clan comes with power and responsibilities. The stronger that they are, the more powerful that their clan will be."

Draco nodded slowly, having heard about this from his father. Something struck him just then, and he looked at Hilda. "You don't seem to be a vampire as well," he said. "Wouldn't they attack you?"

Hilda laughed and shook her head. "Don't worry about it," she said. "They wouldn't dare hurt me. I've been coming to the Samhain festival for years now. I'm blood adopted by the Nightwing clan – the rulers of the Eastern vampire clans."

Draco nodded slowly. His father had told him about this girl: that she's supposedly the missing Girl-Who-Lived. Why his father had told him this, he'll never know. But he knew enough to keep his big mouth shut, especially because Albus Dumbledore is still searching for her, and his godfather had told him that the Girl-Who-Lived who is known as Hilda Evans now isn't exactly a fan of Dumbledore and the Light. He might be young, but he's definitely not stupid.

Besides...

Draco had taken quite a liking to this girl despite only knowing her for a few minutes, and hoped that they could become friends. Despite how much he refuses to admit it, he is extremely lonely, and had been longing for a friend who would befriend him because of what he is rather than who he is.

"It's pretty here," said Draco, looking around him before blinking as little balls of lights could be seen floating around them just then. At first glance, he had assumed them to be fireflies before he studied them closely and realised just what they are. "Are those...faeries?"

Hilda smiled and nodded, holding one hand out, and one of the balls of light landed on her fingertip. "That's right," she said. "I'm surprised that you knew of them. Being able to see the faeries is a rare sight. Especially because the faeries don't really like humans. I'm an exception as I've practically grown up with the vampires."

Draco nodded slowly, having heard about this from his father. He stared as the ball of light on Hilda's hand floated off, and she sighed before turning towards Draco. "Let's go and find your father and godfather," she said. "I'm sure that they must be worried."

"Draco! Where have you been?"

Draco Malfoy winced as he was suddenly engulfed into a bear hug by his ashen-faced father who is acting extremely...un-Malfoy-like. And who could blame him? If your one and only son had came close to being 'eaten' alive by vampires, you would be scared and frightened too.

"I'm sorry, Dad." Draco tried to apologise. "I was bored, then I just wandered off—"

"Don't you ever do that again!" Lucius Malfoy said, his face paler than normal. "You practically took ten years off my life with that stunt of yours!"

"I'm sorry, Dad," said Draco. He then brightened up. "But I'm alright now, aren't I? Hilda helped me out back there."

"Hilda?" His father and godfather blinked, and Hilda stepped out from within the shadows behind Draco, smiling slightly.

"Lucius. Severus." Hilda nodded politely to the two men who nodded back.

Before either man could say anything, Ethan came up just then. "So you found him?" said the vampire, looking rather relieved at having seen Draco safe and sound. He then seemed to remember just what he's here for and turned towards Hilda. "Hilda, Marie wanted to see you. Something about some ritual involving Blood Magic."

Hilda nodded. "Okay," she said before she turned towards Draco. "May the Moon watch over you, Draco Malfoy." She said before crossing her right arm over her chest. "I shall now take my leave."

Severus looked at Draco and a very small smile graced his lips as he saw his godson smiling happily. He had never seen Draco smiling like this before, and was glad that Draco had met Hilda. There is something special about that girl that simply attracts people to her. Lily was the same way as well.

"So Draco," said Severus. "What do you think?"

Draco smiled at his godfather. "I think we can be friends," he said, smiling happily. "My first friend in fact."

Ethan laughed at hearing this.

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Two Years Later  
Starlight's Hall

It was early morning, and dawn was just breaking over the horizon as Hilda headed down the stairs of the inn-cum-bar of the second floor of Starlight's Hall which is where the bedrooms of Ethan and Hilda were located. The house elves were already cleaning the tables and chairs and the floors, and were setting up for business. Ethan was looking through the account books at the bar counter, and Hilda glanced at the tree tapestry on the wall, and gave a sigh of relief as none of the numbers were glowing orange which is a sure sign of the alarm seal in the individual inn rooms going off whenever one of their customers – usually a werewolf – had lost control and had gone berserk during the night. The tree tapestry is one way for them to monitor the state of their customers and to make sure that they can help them during their stay here.

"Morning Ethan." Hilda greeted, and Ethan nodded without looking up from the account books before Hilda grabbed a broom in the corner and pushed opened the door to head outside the bar, the bell tinkling somewhere inside the bar.

The morning mist hadn't lifted yet, and several shops weren't even opened yet. As such, Diagon Alley and Knockturn Alley were extremely silent. Hilda breathed in the fresh morning air, stretching her arms out before stretching, wondering if Draco will come over later.

Draco and herself have become fast friends after their first initial meeting at the Samhain festival two years ago when he had nearly gotten eaten alive by the vampires had Hilda not been there to drag him away. After that, Draco had sometimes gone with Ethan and Hilda to the Samhain festivals whenever his father and godfather were invited, but he was never far from Hilda's side which all adults think is a good thing.

Draco is always popping by Starlight's Hall with or without his parents, and Lucius and Narcissa have both grown accustomed to

the fact that Draco was always over at Starlight's Hall practically the entire day until Lucius and Severus headed over to the bar every night for their usual drink before taking him home. In fact, Draco was so often over at the bar that Narcissa had jokingly said that Starlight's Hall is a second home of sorts for him. The blonde had often helped Hilda with her jobs at Starlight's Hall as well – mainly the sorting of potion vials in the potions cabinet which Ethan had set aside for the customers if they are in need of any.

But seeing as it's barely seven in the morning, Hilda can only guess that the blonde is still asleep in his bed at Malfoy Manor, and will probably pop by a little before afternoon. Unlike how he looks, the blonde could really sleep when he wants to.

Hilda yawned a little as she rubbed her eyes with one hand, sweeping the leaves away from Starlight's Hall with the broom in her hand. She is expecting her Hogwarts' letter any day now, and Ethan had actually taken her to some wand maker friend of his a few months back to have a wand commissioned for her instead of actually getting a wand at Ollivander's as a commissioned wand works better for a wizard or witch, despite the fact that Hilda is actually quite skilled at wandless magic. But as she didn't want any unnecessary attention on her, she agreed to Ethan's request to get a commissioned made wand.

With her morning duties done, Hilda opened the mailbox which is just beside the door of Starlight's Hall and took out all the letters and a copy of that day's Daily Prophet which Ethan had made a mail order for. Hilda was never fond of all the bogus news that the Ministry made day after day, especially with that fool of a Minister in charge, but Ethan preferred keeping himself up-to-date with the Ministry than being kept in the dark.

Hilda looked through all the letters as she took the pile of it out of the mailbox. Bill. Bill. Bill. Another complaint letter from the Ministry which Hilda set aside, intending to burn it in the fireplace later. Merlin knows, they get at least one complaint letter from the Ministry per week because of the nature of the bar, though most of those letters were written by a certain toad faced woman with both a last and a first name, and those names were Dolores Umbridge.

A letter from the head goblin of Gringotts. Probably a bank statement.

And...

A letter bearing the crest of Hogwarts.

Miss H. Evans  
The Bedroom  
Starlight's Hall  
Knockturn Alley

Hilda sighed, staring at her letter. Well, here is the letter at last. And this is where things will really begin.

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"Hey Ethan!" Draco Malfoy greeted, entering Starlight's Hall, with the door closing shut behind him, the bell tinkling somewhere in the bar as it did so. "Where is Hilda?"

It was mid-afternoon, and half of the tables in the bar were occupied with vampires, werewolves, shape shifters, Veelas as well as the occasional wizard or witch wearing robes that identifies them as high ranking Necromancers or Potions Masters or Mistresses. The house elves were running about ragged, taking the orders of the customers as well as delivering them.

"Afternoon Draco." Ethan greeted, mixing some drinks together – doing some experimenting to come up with a new drink again. It is something that he did at least once per week so that the menu will always have something new for regular customers to look forward to. "Hilda's in the back room. She's sorting out the potions cabinet."

Draco nodded to Ethan before heading to the back room of the bar which isn't far from the kitchen where he found his childhood friend standing before a table on which was laid several empty potion vials, and she was busy pouring some potion concoction from a cauldron into those vials.

"Afternoon Draco." Hilda said without even looking up, dragon hide gloves on her hands. "The spare gloves are in the cabinet. So if you'll like to give me a hand here..."



"I'm on it," said Draco grinning as he took the spare dragon hide gloves from the potions cabinet and strapped it on his hands before heading to the table which Hilda is standing before and assisting her to pour the potion concoction into the vials. "What are these by the way?"

"Calming Draughts," said Hilda, screwing the cork onto a potion vial before setting it aside. "We've used up our last stock yesterday."

"That fast?" said Draco, blinking, not losing his concentration whilst pouring the concoctions into the potion vials as well. "By the way, have you received your Hogwarts' letter yet? I've been meaning to ask you, but we somehow always got interrupted whenever we started on this subject. I've received mine last week. Mother will be getting my books for me today in Diagon Alley, I think. I'll be meeting her later."

"Yeah. I've just received it today," said Hilda with a sigh, glancing at her friend whilst brushing a lock of her hair out of her eyes. "I'm not exactly a fan of Dumbledore, and Hogwarts is actually the last place that I'll even want to be in, but as it stands, he runs the only magical school in Britain, and I didn't exactly have a choice."

Draco sighed. "Yeah. Dad didn't like him as well." He said. He then glanced at Hilda. "You got your books already?"

"No," said Hilda curtly. "I can't get away."

"Can't get away'?" Draco repeated, blinking at Hilda. "Hilda, it's only for a few hours."

Hilda sighed before looking at Draco. "Draco, it's near the full moon night," she explained, and Draco 'oh'ed. "And there is only Ethan and I here save for the house elves. And you know that the house elves can't do most of the work here save for the cooking, serving and cleaning parts."

"Why don't you just hire more staff then?" Draco suggested. "It's not like your finances are tight or something. From what I could see, the bar is doing quite well, and you get a steady stream of customers for the inn rooms every single night."

Hilda snorted rather un-lady-like. "Oh yeah? And who will even be willing to work here? You do know what we actually do here, don't you? As well as the nature of this place?"

"Erm..."

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One week later, Hilda finally managed to get away from the bar for a few hours at the most to get her school books and her school uniforms, though she is told by Ethan to hurry back before sundown. It made Hilda wonder how Ethan is going to cope with the bar once she's away at school. He'll probably collapse.

"Afternoon Hilda."

Hilda turned around at the voice only to see an aged old man standing outside a shop with the words 'Borgin and Burkes' written across the signboard which is slowly peeling, indicating the number of years that the shop must have been here.

A small smile graced Hilda's lips as she nodded to the man. "Afternoon, Mr Borgin," she said.

The old man smiled kindly at Hilda. "Not at the bar tonight?" he asked.

"Not for a few hours," said Hilda with a shake of her head. "I'm going to get my school books and uniforms at Diagon Alley."

Mr Borgin smiled knowingly. "Ah. Starting at Hogwarts this year, are you?" he said. "How time flies. It seems just like yesterday that you're that small five-year-old who had just moved into that empty shop space with your guardian." He chuckled. "Well, I won't hold you up." He nodded to Hilda before entering his shop.

There was a slight hoot just then before Hilda could even move a single step, and the raven haired girl jumped slightly as a flash of white dropped down onto her shoulder, and a snowy white owl nibbled at her ear.

"Hedwig!" Hilda sighed. "You gave me a scare!" Hedwig hooted urgently, her amber eyes trying to tell Hilda something, and the girl

frowned. "Trouble?" Hedwig hooted, and Hilda took that as a yes. The girl sighed. "Where?"

Hermione Granger was having the greatest and most terrible day of her life.

She was your every day practical girl who looked forward to having a proper education in a middle school, then high school, and maybe college before settling down in a proper job to support herself and her parents. Not very complicated right? Well, a certain letter threw an immediate wrench into her plans when she received an invitation to a school by the name of Hogwarts – really, who on earth will name a school that? – which states that it's a magical school, and that she's a witch.

Hermione and her parents have thought that it's someone's rather poor idea of a practical joke until a woman who had introduced herself as Minerva McGonagall had turned up at their doorstep five days ago wearing the strangest clothes with a pointed hat, and had introduced herself as the Deputy Headmistress of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry.

She had then taken a two hour interview with Hermione and her parents, stating that yes, magic is indeed real, and that yes, Hermione is indeed a witch with magical blood flowing within her veins, and that she was accepted as a student at Hogwarts where she is a teacher there as well. It didn't take too long to convince Hermione and her parents that she is a witch when McGonagall transformed their couch into a pig which Joanna Granger wasn't very pleased with until the witch had transformed it back.

And thus, one Hermione Granger found herself with her parents on a bright Wednesday afternoon in Diagon Alley to get all her school books along with a few other books which the shopkeeper of Flourish and Blotts was kind enough to recommend to her for some introduction to the magical world as well as to get her school robes.

It was a great eye opener for Hermione, seeing as how she's seen several exciting shops whilst on her way to the bookstore, and she was about to head to the Leaky Cauldron where her parents were after she's gotten her books when she heard the sounds of crying, and her kind hearted nature couldn't just ignore a child in need, and

thus, she headed off towards the direction of the sound which is down a rather less populated street than Diagon Alley.

And it is when a man with pale skin and a pointed face with untidy hair appeared in front of her that Hermione knew that something is wrong. The man was also wearing a black shirt which exposes his pale chest and black pants with no shoes.

"W-Who are you?" Hermione stammered, hugging a book to her chest, the rest of her books with her parents who were resting at the Leaky Cauldron after a whole day of running around Diagon Alley. "W-What do you want with me?"

The man smiled, revealing several pointed teeth before making a move as if he was going to leap at her, and Hermione closed her eyes before she heard a light thud as if someone had landed in front of her, and opened her eyes only to see the back of a raven haired young girl around her age, only about a head shorter than her standing in between her and that...man.

The girl turned her head slightly to look at Hermione, and the bushy haired girl was mesmerised by her red-blue eyes which had wisdom, sadness and several things reflected within those orbs before the girl turned her attention back towards the man who seemed half-afraid upon seeing this girl, for some reason.

"She's not your meal," said the girl in a soft voice, yet Hermione could detect a note of warning within it. "Hurry up and go."

The man trembled, fear in his eyes as he saw the girl, and took one step backwards, his body shaking as he did so. "E-Evans...!"

"I don't care if you hunt down some unsuspecting human in other places, Graipher," said the girl sharply. "But I won't have you having one of your 'episodes' in Knockturn Alley! We have a bad enough reputation as it is, and I won't have you smearing our name even more! Now leave."

Graipher gulped before he disappeared in a wisp of black smoke. The girl sighed before turning towards Hermione. "I'm glad that I've made it in time," she said. She then smiled at Hermione. "Are you alright?"

Hermione nodded, smiling weakly. "Y-Yeah. Thank you."

The girl glanced at the extremely thick book in her arms before her lips curled up slightly in amusement before turning back towards Hermione. "Are you starting at Hogwarts this year?"

Hermione nodded. "Yeah."

"What are you doing down here? You shouldn't even be in Knockturn Alley in the first place without your parents or the supervision of an adult wizard or witch," said the girl. "It's dangerous here. Especially for Muggle-born witches and wizards. Did you get lost?"

"Kind of." Hermione admitted. "I'm Hermione Granger. Nice to meet you."

"Hilda Evans," said the girl, stretching out a hand which Hermione took. Hilda smiled. "I have nothing better to do anyway. I'll help you find your parents. Besides, you need an escort as you navigate through Knockturn Alley. It has quite a reputation for the 'Dark'."

Hermione blinked owlishly.

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Half-an-hour later, Hermione found herself in the populated streets of Diagon Alley and heaved a sigh of relief. All the way to Diagon Alley, she found herself keeping up a conversation about books and what is best to study to prepare herself for her first year in Hogwarts with Hilda whom she found is a person after her own heart. The girl loves books and reading as well. Not as much as Hermione, of course, but still, it's a rare change from having people poke fun at her for studying so much.

Hermione can't help liking Hilda as well. The girl was quiet and do not speak much unless spoken to or when asking a question, but Hermione felt...safe around her. And the bushy haired girl wasn't sure if it's her imagination or not as well, but she could sense something different about Hilda. She doesn't feel at all like all the witches and wizards that she's met so far.

Or maybe that it's just a magical thing.

"Here's the Leaky Cauldron," said Hilda, and Hermione blinked as they were currently standing in front of said inn. "Come on, let's go in."

Hermione nodded before entering the inn, and the innkeeper, Tom, seemed both surprised and a little afraid to see Hilda for some reason which Hermione noticed and wondered at, mentally filing it away for future reference. And when she glanced at Hilda to gauge her reaction, she saw that Hilda didn't have a single emotion on her face at all, almost like she was used to it by now.

"Tom. Do you know where the Grangers are?"

Tom muttered something incoherent and pointed to a corner table where Hermione glanced towards and saw that her parents were sitting at said table, interestedly poring over some of Hermione's books which she's left with them.

"Thank you," said Hilda curtly before walking towards the Grangers' table with Hermione.

"Mom! Dad!" Hermione called out, heading towards her parents whom both looked up at Hermione's shout, and smiles broke out on their faces.

"Hermione! Back at last?" laughed John Granger. "I thought that we might have to be here until closing time."

"Dad!" Hermione whined. She then remembered Hilda and pushed Hilda forwards, the raven haired girl a little startled at this action. "Mom, Dad, this is Hilda Evans. She helped me out earlier when I...got lost earlier."

"Is that right?" said Joanna with a smile. "It's very nice to meet you, Hilda. Thank you for helping Hermione. I'm Joanna Granger, Hermione's mother. That is my husband, John Granger."

"Pleasure to meet you too," said Hilda, taking Joanna's hand in a brief handshake. She then turned towards Hermione with a smile. "I'll look forward to seeing you on the train on September first, Hermione."

"Oh. Will you be starting at Hogwarts this year as well?" asked Hermione hopefully, and Hilda smiled and nodded.

"Yeah. Me and my friend," said Hilda. "You'll like him." She then glanced at her watch and sighed. "Great. It's getting late." She then looked back at the Grangers. "I should probably get going now."

"Oh. Are your parents waiting for you somewhere perhaps?" asked Hermione, suddenly feeling guilty at having taken up so much of her new friend's time.

Hilda shook her head. "I'm an orphan."

Hermione's face fell. "Oh. I'm sorry!"

"It's okay," said Hilda with an assuring smile. "I live around here actually."

Hermione blinked. "Huh?"

Hilda laughed. "You didn't wonder what I'm even doing in Knockturn Alley in the first place?" she asked, and Hermione looked embarrassed whilst her parents looked confused. Knockturn Alley? What's that?

"Well..."

"My guardian runs an inn-cum-bar in Knockturn Alley." Hilda explained to the Grangers. "Starlight's Hall. We live in there as well. You should drop by once you have the chance." She took out a piece of parchment from her pocket and handed it to Hermione who saw that it's a map with directions to Starlight's Hall as well as the opening hours written on it. "Though...you might get surprised by our customers there."

"What do you mean?" asked John Granger, pleased at seeing his daughter having made a friend at last. His daughter was never popular with her peers because of her love for studying and reading, and barely has any friends.

"Our customers aren't exactly your regular 'people'," said Hilda with a smile. "Most of them are non-humans like the vampires, banshees, Veelas, goblins, werewolves and many others. Humans aren't our

only customers. It's the nature of our bar which is the reason why we're regulated in Knockturn Alley."

Hermione nodded slowly, having heard about just what kind of place Knockturn Alley is from Hilda during their walk to the Leaky Cauldron. Yet she was interested to see just what kind of place Starlight's Hall is, and maybe see a real magical creature or two like a Veela or something that she's only read about in books.

Hilda sighed, glancing at her watch before looking back at the Grangers. "I'm really sorry, but I really have to go now," she said. "My uncle needs my help back at the bar. It's this hour of the day when we're at our busiest."

"Oh. We didn't mean to take up so much of your time," said Joanna apologetically, and Hilda shook her head.

"It's alright," she said. She then smiled. "You're welcome to come and visit us whenever you like. Though Hermione..." She glanced at the busy haired girl. "You'd best come with an adult's supervision."

Hermione looked embarrassed, but nodded. "And even if I can't go and visit your bar, I'll still see you on the train on September first, right?" she asked, and Hilda nodded.

"Naturally," she said. "Alright. I really have to go. See you on September first, Hermione."

Hermione smiled and nodded before the Granger family waved goodbye to Hilda, and the girl entered Diagon Alley once more. Hilda sighed to herself as she saw that the sun is setting soon, and glanced at her watch.

'Great. Looks like I have to come again another day to get my school books and uniforms,' she thought as she made her way back to Starlight's Hall. But she smiled as she remembered Hermione and her parents. 'But it looks like I've managed to make a friend at the least.'



## Chapter Three: Cedric Diggory

### Starlight's Hall Knockturn Alley

Hilda was making her way down to the first level of the bar, having just cleared the trash from the individual inn rooms when she heard several loud curses from the back room where Ethan currently is. It was a little before noon, and thus, business was a little slow during this hour.

The house elf that had looked after Hilda ever since she was five years old from the first moment when Ethan had opened the bar walked past her just then, seemingly going to clean the inn rooms, and Hilda stopped her.

"Lyra. What's gotten Ethan so mad?"

The house elf seemed a tad bit amused as she looked up at Hilda. "Master Ethan forgot to get some potion vials from the Apothecary in Diagon Alley, and Master has run out of it for the Blood Replenishing Potions that Master had gotten Master Snape to prepare for Master."

Hilda bit back a laugh at this. This has to be the first time that she's seen Ethan forgetting to do something. The vampire usually has quite a good memory and rarely forgets stuff like this. "I'd better go and tell him that I'll get it for him before he blows a fuse," said Hilda with a smile, and Lyra, the house elf excused herself to go on about her duties.

As Hilda neared the back room where the potions cabinets were kept as well as the potions cauldrons to brew potions as well as where several bandages were kept in case the werewolves ever hurt themselves during their transformation, Hilda could hear Ethan's curses getting louder and could make out what he's saying.

"I knew that I've forgotten to do something! Of all the things in the world, I just have to forget to get a new batch of potions vials when it's so near the full moon!"

Hilda cleared her throat politely, and Ethan didn't turn around, still rummaging through the cabinet in the hopes to find some empty potions vials.

"If you've here to remind me that you're repeatedly reminded me to get the potions vials last week, Lyra, I don't need to hear it!"

The house elves that worked for them are generally treated very well by Ethan and Hilda, and most of their customers who weren't humans and a few were even part-humans treated them well as well as majority of them knew how discrimination feels.

"Ethan, should I get the potions vials for you?" asked Hilda calmly, and Ethan turned around in surprise. Her lips twitched a little. "You can search all you want, but you won't find any empty vials. I've used the last of them for the Calming Draughts a few days ago."

Ethan nearly groaned. "If you can go to the Apothecary, it'll be very much appreciated," he said glumly.

"I'll make a move now," said Hilda before leaving the bar.

It didn't take Hilda longer than half-an-hour before she has a new batch of potions vials being wrapped up in a package, with all the vials being charmed with an Anti Breakable spell by the staff at the Apothecary as Ethan and Hilda were regulars there to get potion vials and even various potions ingredients or books. As such, the staffs at the Apothecary were just among the few people in Diagon Alley who actually liked them.

It's a strange thing, but most people at Diagon Alley were generally afraid or disliked the people who worked or lived in Knockturn Alley. When Hilda had first arrived here, she had learned that the hard way when a friend that she's made abandoned her when he found out where she lives and who Ethan really is.

A flash of white swooped down just then as Hilda exited the Apothecary, landing on her shoulder, and Hilda turned towards her owl who hooted a series of hoots, nibbling at her ear gently, and Hilda raised an eyebrow as she recognised that action of her beloved owl and sighed.

"Trouble again?" she asked, and Hedwig hooted once more. Hilda took that as a yes, and she sighed. Usually, when there's trouble in Knockturn Alley, either herself or Ethan were the ones dealing with it. As unlike contrary belief, Knockturn Alley is not dark. It's just the

nature of the shops there that gave Knockturn Alley that reputation. And the people of Knockturn Alley have also noticed that ever since Hilda and Ethan's arrivals here, their reputation is slowly improving with the decrease of unintentional attacks by werewolves and whatnot. Especially near the full moon nights. "Where is it?"

"Erm...sir? Are you sure that you're alright?"

Cedric Diggory was wondering if he should go and get his parents or something.

He had been to Diagon Alley that day with his parents to get his school books for the new school year, and was passing by the entrance of Knockturn Alley when he heard some faint groaning like the owner of said voice was in pain, and had seen a man wearing a beige coat sitting on the steps which lead down to Knockturn Alley clutching his chest like he was in pain, and being the kind hearted Samaritan that he was, he had tried to see if he could help, but the man could barely string two words together.

"G-Get..."

"Excuse me?" Cedric placed one hand on the arm of the man, trying to help him up.

"Get away from me!"

"Huh?"

Cedric froze as he saw that the eyes of the man were alternating between yellow and brown and froze. He had only read this about in books, and his father had mentioned this to him. People who have been bitten by werewolves found it harder and harder to control their transformation the older that they get, and a few can even transform in broad daylight without a moon.

"Seiner!"

Cedric blinked and turned towards the source of the voice only to feel a draught of wind flew past him, and before he knew it, golden rope which was glowing slightly had pinned the man to the ground. And a raven haired girl headed down the stairs that led to Knockturn Alley past him, stopping a fair distance away from the man.

"Seiner! Come to your senses! Don't undo all your hard work!"

Cedric can only stare as he leant against the wall, his heart thumping a hundred miles per minute. Who is this girl? And what kind of magic is that?

"Cedric?"

Cedric turned at the sound of the voice, and his face brightened up as he saw his parents standing at the entrance of Knockturn Alley. "Mum! Dad!"

Amos Diggory and Anna Diggory walked down the steps towards their son, Anna checking her son for any visible injuries. "Are you hurt? What are you doing down here?"

"I thought that that man was injured, and tried to help. But..."

Anna and Amos turned towards the werewolf and the raven haired girl who was currently speaking in low tones to the currently pinned down werewolf, trying to help him to calm his mind. Cedric knew that that is just one of the ways to contain his wolf side until he can find a place to transform safely.

The girl then straightened up and called out, "Lyra?"

There was a pop before a female house elf Apparated right beside the girl, wearing the standard tea-towel that all house elves seemed to wear with a mini dark blue apron over it with the words 'Starlight's Hall' written on it in white.

"Miss Hilda?"

Hilda sighed. "Take him back to the bar," she instructed, and the house elf nodded before grabbing hold of the man and Disapparated with a loud pop before she sighed and turned towards the Diggory family and blinked. "Mr Diggory?"

Cedric blinked and turned towards his father who looked both bewildered and surprised to see the girl. "Hilda?" Amos Diggory looked bewildered. "What are you doing down here?"

Hilda frowned. "That should be my question," she said. She then glanced at Cedric and sighed. "I'm very sorry about earlier. As you've probably guessed, Seiner is a werewolf. Tonight is the full moon, and he's not exactly at his most stable and sanest then. I'm so sorry if he has given you a bad scare."

"Son. Anna. This is Hilda Evans," said Amos Diggory. "Hilda, this is my wife and son. Anna and Cedric."

"It's a pleasure to meet you," said Anna with a gentle smile, a gesture which Hilda returned.

"I've met Hilda and her guardian about two years ago when I was searching for a werewolf who had completely lost his senses when he was transforming," said Amos, answering the unasked question. "I...didn't want to apprehend the poor fellow as it isn't something that he can help, but it's Ministry's orders. And then, I met Ethan. Hilda's guardian. He helped me out a lot with that case without me having to apprehend that poor guy."

Hilda smiled. "Why don't you come over to our bar?" she asked. "The drinks will be on the house, and I know that Ethan wanted to see you again, Mr Diggory."

"It's Amos," said Amos with a smile before nodding. "Sure. We're almost done with our shopping anyway, and I've wanted to visit your bar for some time now."

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Starlight's Hall  
Knockturn Alley

"So you've just met Amos and his family at the entrance of Knockturn Alley?" asked Ethan as plates of food and drinks appeared before the Diggory family at the bar counter that they were sitting at. Hilda was currently in the back room unpacking the potions vials and soon came out a few moments later.

Hilda sighed. "Seiner is losing control again," she said, and Ethan's face fell. "Looks like he might have to take the Wolfsbane Potion about a week before the full moon or something." She glanced at

Ethan. "Do you think we should contact Lycia or something? She might be able to help him. Her and her clan."

"I'll see what Seiner thinks," said Ethan doubtfully.

As a rule, they don't usually interfere with their guests' 'condition' unless it's really serious, and even then, they usually seek the individual's permission before actually doing anything.

Whilst Hilda and Ethan were having their conversation, Cedric was looking around the bar. Amos had explained the nature of the bar to his son and wife, and both were quite surprised at having a bar of this nature, as because of Amos' job, they knew the prejudice that the non-humans and several wizards have to face in their world.

Amos had only been here once after Ethan had helped him out, and had also met Lucius Malfoy and Severus Snape here. While he wasn't a really avid 'Dark hater', Amos didn't really interact with Lucius much either because they both served in different departments in the Ministry, and was thus, quite cool with the Malfoy head. But like what Ethan had told Hilda later, neutral is much better than outright ostracizing.

Cedric blinked as a glass appeared in his view as he watched a few house elves serving the customers in the bar with interest, and turned towards the person that had handed him the glass only to see that it's Hilda.

The raven haired girl was smiling slightly. "You probably won't like most of the drinks that Ethan had invented as it's mostly for adults. He had been experimenting on some for underage witches and wizards, but in the meantime, have some Butterbeer."

Cedric smiled and nodded before taking the glass from Hilda. "Thank you."

"I'm so sorry about Seiner, by the way," said Hilda apologetically. "Today happens to be the time of the month for Seiner. That's why he's much more aggressive than usual. He's usually not like this. It's also a full moon night today and the next three nights. That's why we're at our busiest, with the werewolves coming in here so that they have a safe place to transform without the fear of hurting people."

Cedric nodded dumbly, having heard about this from his father. Part of the reason why Starlight's Hall was set up is so that the werewolves have a safe place to transform without actually fearing that they will hurt people. The moment that Severus Snape had heard about this when he had first come here, he had kindly offered to brew batches of Wolfsbane Potions for Ethan every month so that the transformation of the werewolves will be kinder on them which Ethan was quick to accept, and that's kind of Severus' sideline job, and the man even brewed all kinds of potions for them as well if he had the time. It was nearly amusing to see Cedric's face when he'd heard that his strict and no nonsense Potions teacher at Hogwarts actually did a 'good deed'.

"By the way..." said Anna, glancing between Hilda and Ethan both before turning back towards Ethan. "How are you two related? You don't look old enough to be her uncle."

Ethan paused before turning towards a sheepish looking Amos. "Amos, didn't you tell her?"

"No."

Ethan studied Amos carefully. "Will she mind?" he asked, and whilst Anna and Cedric didn't have the slightest idea what he's talking about, Amos and Hilda does.

Amos shook his head, and that was good enough for Ethan. He turned towards Anna and Cedric. "Most of our customers and most of the people who lived and worked here knew what I am, Ma'am," he said seriously. "That's why you'll probably hear many people in Diagon Alley badmouthing me. And I'm also ashamed to say that that's also part of the reason why they're alienated Hilda as well. Because I'm her guardian."

Hilda looked pointedly away, pretending to be busy cleaning the bar counter, and Anna looked at Ethan with a curious expression. "What do you mean?"

"I'm a vampire, Mrs Diggory," said Ethan, much to Cedric and Anna's surprise. "I've found Hilda six years ago as an orphan, and as her powers are unusually strong for a child, I took her in myself. Basically, I blood adopted her. That's why she has both vampire and

wizard magic flowing through her veins. And even if she can't use wizard magic during the holidays once she's started school, Ministry regulations didn't say anything about vampire magic."

Amos was grinning as he caught onto what Ethan was saying. "That's true," he said. He then turned towards Anna. "Anna, do you mind what Ethan is?"

"Not a bit," said Anna with a smile. "If you've raised such a nice and well-mannered girl by yourself, then you can't be that bad yourself. You're probably better than most wizards that I've met."

Ethan smiled sheepishly. "Thank you for the compliments."

"This drink tastes unique as well." Anna commented, taking a sip from her drink. "Did you make this?"

"Some of them," said Ethan with a nod. "Some of the drinks' recipes were made up by Hilda. We usually had a new drink or food added to the menu every week so that our customers will have something to look forward to. Starlight's Hall...is mostly used as a safe haven for the non-humans where they can escape prejudice...if only for just a while."

Amos and Anna exchanged sad looks. They knew what it felt like, especially seeing as how several of their friends were regularly being discriminated against by people of their world. Even Amos who isn't exactly fond of Lucius Malfoy didn't like seeing the proud Malfoy head getting discriminated against by people like the Weasley head. Lucius didn't show it to anyone, but Amos knew that the Malfoy head was quite hurt by it...even if part of it was true.

"There werewolves come here every single time that it's near the full moon where they can transform and not fear that they will hurt others. We're always at our busiest then. I don't even know how I'm going to cope once Hilda goes to school." Ethan sighed. "I am aware that Starlight's Hall had quite a bad reputation with the Ministry, but it helps the non-humans a lot, and a few of the wizards and witches too. And Hilda actually likes the jobs here and the people that always came to us. It keeps her happy and also allows her more interaction with others. Unlike contrary belief, vampires do feel. We functions just like humans does save for the fact that we actually have to feed on blood in order to survive."



"Don't worry about the Ministry," said Amos, and Anna nodded. "It's mostly just Fudge and Umbridge who are unhappy about this. Most of us welcome the idea of this as werewolf attacks have actually lessened ever since Starlight's Hall is set up." He grinned. "Less work for me too, by the way." The Diggory family and Ethan laughed, and Hilda had a smile on her face as well. Amos then sighed. "Though I've been hearing things from Augusta Longbottom that Dumbledore isn't too impressed with your bar. Something about it not being right for a vampire to raise a human child. But seeing as how you've blood adopted her, there isn't much that he can do about it. When you've opened your bar, exactly who you have with you spread like wildfire throughout the Ministry."

Cedric and Hilda's ears perked up at the mention of Dumbledore, but both wisely decided not to say anything, especially since it seems like the adults have forgotten about their presences. Ethan paled slightly at the 'who' part, but relaxed when it didn't seem like Amos had figured out about Hilda's real identity.

Ethan sighed. "I'm almost afraid to send Hilda to Hogwarts," he muttered, and the Diggory family looked startled.

"Pardon?"

"Hilda is starting at Hogwarts this year." Ethan answered. He sighed. "I don't particularly want to send her there, but as Hogwarts is the only magical school in Britain, I have no choice. Furthermore, her only friend is there, and I don't exactly want to separate the two. Lucius and Severus will have my head for that. Vampire or not."

Hilda stared curiously at Cedric who was mesmerised by her blue-red eyes. "Your dad doesn't like this Dumbledore guy? Draco had told me stories about him as well. And that his father doesn't like him too."

Cedric sighed. "Dad isn't exactly a great fan of Professor Dumbledore," he said apologetically. "He doesn't like it when someone places too much prejudice against several members of our world, and that he seems too obsessed with the 'Light'."

Hilda frowned. "I don't think that I'm going to like him," she muttered, not noticing the fact that the adults were all glancing at Cedric and her. "You're a student at Hogwarts, aren't you?"

Cedric nodded, looking quite proud. "I'm starting my third year this school year," he said. "You're starting there this year?" Hilda nodded. "Do you want me to tell you more about the school?"

Hilda nodded. "That'll be great."

Cedric then lapsed into a long and lengthy explanation about Hogwarts, the castle itself, the four Houses, the teachers and the subjects, going into an extremely detailed explanation about the entire school, even the infamous Weasley twins and their pranks, the Hogwarts' ghosts as well as their resident poltergeist.

Cedric was in the midst of telling Hilda about one of the pranks of the infamous Weasley twins when an alarm that sounds like one of the fire sirens in the Muggle world started going off, and Ethan and Hilda immediately turned their attention towards the tree tapestry on the wall not far from them.

"Hilda!"

"Which room is it?" asked Hilda, scanning all the glowing numbers on the leaves of the tree tapestry, trying to see which number is glowing orange so that she'll know which one of their customers is in trouble.

Being a vampire, Ethan's sight is sharper than Hilda's, and he caught the glowing orange number almost immediately. "Room 608!" he said. He then narrowed his eyes as he remembered just who was occupying that current room. "That's Leiher's..."

Hilda growled. "I'm going," she said before slipping one hand into her pocket and drawing out a bunch of keys.

"Wait, I'll come with you," interrupted Cedric, sliding off his seat.

"But..."

"Hilda, it's probably best to have some help to subdue Leiher if you ever need any," said Ethan wisely. "You know how aggressive that he can be in bloodlust mood."

Hilda looked doubtful, but nodded. "Okay."

Room 608  
Starlight's Hall

"Before we actually go in, do you know any martial arts?" asked Hilda, turning towards Cedric, the bunch of keys to each individual inn room in Starlight's Hall in her hand. "Enough to defend yourself and to subdue someone if necessary?"

Cedric was startled at this question but nodded. "I learnt some during the holidays ever since my first year," he said.

"Good," said Hilda with a sigh. "Be careful. Leiher has a tendency of going...berserk at times. That's what the seal actually does which alerted us via the tree tapestry. It's how we know when our customers are in trouble."

Cedric nodded and stood aside as Hilda inserted a blue key into the lock of the door – knowing it to be a magical key as Ethan had explained earlier that all the locks on the inn room doors of Starlight's Hall are magically enchanted to prevent the locks from giving way or from the doors from breaking. It's a safety precaution so that the werewolves won't be able to break out when transforming. Naturally, all the items in the rooms – furniture or not – were all charmed with an Anti Breakable spell as well, only much stronger.

There was a loud click as the lock opened, and Hilda placed the bunch of keys back within her pocket and opened the door cautiously. "Leiher?" she called out warily. "Are you there?"

There were several scratches visible on the walls and carpets of the room, and Cedric watched in disguised amazement as the scratches slowly 'healed' itself. It was a type of vampire magic that Ethan had came up with when he had first opened Starlight's Hall to lessen the workload of the house elves and also to cut down on costs to repair the rooms each and every time.

There was a low growl just then, and Cedric and Hilda froze as they caught the sight of a werewolf being perched on the ceiling with glowing golden eyes. Cedric gulped and Hilda practically placed herself in front of him.

"Hilda?"

"Get away from here," she practically hissed, not taking her eyes off the werewolf. "Now!"

Too late.

With a loud growl, the werewolf leapt straight at them, his claws outstretched, and neither Hilda nor Cedric have enough time to get out of the way.

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There was a tinkle of a bell that indicates someone had just entered the bar, and Ethan looked up from his very interesting conversation with Amos who was talking about his work at the Ministry and all the magical creatures that he had a chance of meeting which included several vampires. A pale faced man with light honey brown hair which almost looks white walked in, a beige overcoat practically hanging off him.

"...Ethan. The usual, please."

Ethan nodded before fumbling within the drawer on his side of the bar counter before taking out a golden key with a glass plaque attached to it with the numbers 406 written on it in red, the glass plaque charmed with an Anti Breakable charm on it. He passed the key to the man. "Room 406," he said. "Fourth level. Third room on the right. The locking charm will activate immediately once you're in the room. The house elves will take you some food later in the evening. I'll get Lyra to send the Wolfsbane Potion up to your room in a little while."

The now identified werewolf nodded a grateful thanks to Ethan before taking the key from the vampire and moving up the stairs to the inn room that he was assigned.

Not even five minutes after that, Cedric and Hilda were both walking down the stairs, their clothes looking slightly ruffled, with Hilda nursing her left wrist and Cedric was watching her in concern. Ethan raised an eyebrow.

"Hilda?"

"Son? What's wrong?" asked Amos in concern.

"Ethan, we need some Calming Draught," said Hilda, nursing her hand. "I almost broke my hand trying to restrain Leiher! I swear that he gets faster and stronger every month! We might need to get Severus to come up with an improvised version of the Wolfsbane Potion as it didn't seem to be working on Leiher anymore. Thankfully, Cedric is there with me, and between the both of us, we managed to knock Leiher out."

Cedric looked sheepish at this point in time as the two children walked towards the bar counter before Ethan retreated to the back room to get the potion that Hilda had asked for. "I never actually thought that those judo and taekwondo lessons that I took during the holidays will actually come in useful," he mumbled.

"Hilda."

Ethan turned up from out of nowhere just then and passed a crystal potion vial containing some liquid within it towards her which Cedric knew was the Calming Draught, seeing as how he's brewed it more than once during his first and second years at Hogwarts.

"Thanks," said Hilda, picking up the vial with her uninjured hand. "I'll be right back."

And she was soon making her way up the stairs once more, with Cedric following her.

Anna chuckled silently to herself. "I see what you mean earlier, Ethan," she said. "She has a way with the customers."

Ethan smiled and nodded. "Every single one of our customers likes her," he said. "They're going to miss her once she actually goes to school. Granted, she's going to be back here during the holidays, but still... The elves and the vampires especially will miss her. She's

the one who actually interacts with the customers. My interaction with them is kept at a bare minimum." He sighed. "Sometimes, I worry about her. Her only friend is Draco, and it isn't healthy. She used to have another friend a long time ago, but that insufferable brat abandoned her when he found out where she lives and works, and what I really am. I guess...Hilda is just afraid to get hurt once her friends abandoned her once they found out about me."

Anna and Amos were silent. They can guess to an extent what kind of life that Ethan and Hilda have led throughout all these years. "Well, my boy is a real gentleman," said Amos, breaking the silence. "He'll be able to help look after your girl in school even if they're not in the same House. And most of Ced's friends are pretty open-minded. They wouldn't care about Hilda's background."

Ethan smiled unsurely. "I hope so."

Cedric and Hilda returned just then, and the adults quickly switched to another topic altogether as Ethan knew that Hilda won't like it when someone worries over her. Ethan glanced at the calendar just then and saw that there's just another week to go before Hilda has to ride the train for Hogwarts, and glanced at his ward.

"Hilda, maybe you should go and get your books and school robes," he said. "It has already been delayed for long enough. You won't be able to get all your books in time for September first if you don't get them now. I can handle the bar and the customers by myself for a few hours."

Hilda nodded. "Fine."

"We'll come with you," said Anna with a smile. "Cedric hasn't gotten all his books as well."

"Well then, I'll gratefully accept the offer," said Ethan with a charming smile. "I hope that you won't take offense, but most of the shopkeepers in Diagon Alley don't like Hilda very much."

Amos nodded. "We understand."

"I'll be back soon, Ethan," said Hilda before exiting the bar with Cedric after her.

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Their first stop was at Madam Malkin's Robes for All Occasions to get Hilda's school robes. Fortunately, Madam Malkin was one of the few people in Diagon Alley who was quite neutral to the people in Knockturn Alley and treated Hilda like every other customer by getting her to stand on the stool whilst she measured Hilda's measurements before getting her school robes.

The next stop was Flourish and Blotts where they've spent nearly an hour in there as like Hilda, Cedric loves reading as well, and both were having a kind of debate over some book that they've found until Anna had pointed out the time before both have hurriedly grabbed the books that they need along with a few extra books for Hilda before paying for their purchases. Hilda was a regular at the store, and the store clerk had actually smiled at her when they were paying for their purchases.

They also visited the Apothecary to get the potions ingredients written on the school lists of both Cedric's and Hilda's, and bought the necessary equipment for Hilda for Potions lessons in school. The girl was quite curious as to what Severus was like as a teacher as Cedric had said that Snape is one of the strictest teachers that he had ever met.

As Hilda already had a wand, she didn't need to buy another one, and as they were nearly all done with their shopping, Hilda was getting ready to return to the bar, but Anna Diggory had insisted on buying Hilda a pet to thank her for her help. Cedric and his father were both quite amused at this, as the two knew that no one wins an argument against Anna Diggory.

"No, Mrs Diggory—"

"Anna," injected Anna.

"Okay. Anna. You really don't have to get me one, because—"

A snowy white owl swooped down just then and landed on Hilda's shoulder, hooting gently, and Hilda stroked the head of her owl. "This is Hedwig," said Hilda. "She acts like my eyes around here. It's how I knew Seiner had nearly lost control back then. She's my only

friend for years after...my first friend died. Eve gave her to me as a baby owl, and she helped me raised Hedwig."

"Eve?" Amos dared to ask.

"She's Ethan's cousin," said Hilda with a sad smile. "She died a few years ago."

The Diggory family could tell that Hilda didn't want to talk about it, and Cedric quickly changed the subject. "So...I guess that I'll see you aboard the train on September first?" he asked hastily, and Hilda nodded.

"Naturally," she said. "It's great meeting you, Cedric, Mr Diggory, Mrs Diggory. I will take my leave now."

Starlight's Hall  
Knockturn Alley

"Ethan, I'm back," said Hilda tiredly, weighed down by all her packages, and a bell tinkled somewhere as she entered the bar. Lyra and another house elf walked up to Hilda to take her burden off her before bringing it straight to her room via Apparation.

"Had a good time?" asked Ethan with a smile on his face.

"Kind of," said Hilda, taking the drink that Ethan handed her, and finishing the drink with four gulps.

Ethan's face turned serious just then. "By the way, Hilda, you have a visitor. He's been here for some time now."

Hilda raised one eyebrow. "Who is it?"

Ethan turned silently towards a corner table in the bar, and Hilda followed his gaze only to see a brown haired man wearing relatively ragged robes sitting in a corner with a glass of some beverage on the table before him, and her face fell slightly, recognising the man immediately.

"...Remus Lupin."



A/N: Can anyone guess who that 'friend' of Hilda's was who had abandoned her when he found out about Ethan? A cookie to anyone who had managed to guess it correctly. Next chapter: on the Hogwarts train and the Sorting.

I hope that you like this chapter and please read and review!

## Chapter Four: Aboard the Hogwarts' Express

Starlight's Hall  
Knockturn Alley

The day of departure for the Hogwarts' Express, and ultimately, Hogwarts itself shone bright and clear on this September morning, and one Hilda Evans could already be seen up and about even before the sun is up when more than half of Britain's population were probably still asleep in their beds.

The house elves and Ethan were all busy with the usual morning cleaning duties before the bar actually opens for business, and Hilda was practically struggling to drag five big and black garbage bags larger than her out of the front door to dump it by the dumpster in the alley. The girl was wondering if there is a party or something between Ethan, Lucius and Severus last night. Ethan had sent Hilda up to her room early the previous evening as she had to pack her bags for Hogwarts, and thus, Ethan was stuck with running the bar alone the previous evening.

A hand suddenly latched out and easily pulled the trash bags out of the front door that Hilda was struggling with. As Hilda looked up, she saw the unmistakable figure of one Remus Lupin, and her eyes hardened slightly.

Hilda had met the guy once about three years ago when Ethan has just opened Starlight's Hall, and the guy was one of their first customers back then. For some reason that Ethan simply can't comprehend, Remus Lupin had recognised Hilda immediately for who she really is. The fortunate thing is that Lupin doesn't seem to be a very great fan of Dumbledore and had never told anyone who Hilda really is.

Jessica, a female vampire friend of Ethan's who is the High Priestess of one of the vampire clans that lived up in the mountains had told Ethan that as a werewolf, Lupin could recognise Hilda by scent as it's the only thing that won't change about Hilda, vampire ritual or not.

"...it's you," said Hilda before lugging the trash bags with her to the alley not too far away from Starlight's Hall, with Lupin following her. "Shouldn't you be in your room or something?"

Remus Lupin chewed on his bottom lip before Hilda stopped outside the alleyway, resisting the urge to pinch his nose to block out the stench as the raven haired girl threw the trash bags next to the dumpster.

"Why do you refuse to admit that you're Lily and James' Potter's daughter?" Remus wanted to know.

In fact, he had wanted to know the reason to this question for the past three years ever since he knew who Hilda is, yet can never bring himself to ask. For one thing, Hilda Evans is definitely not what he had imagined his little goddaughter to be. And another thing is that she resembles Ethan and the Nightwing vampire clan more in both mannerisms and looks. Remus had only met the Nightwing vampire clan once several years ago during the war, and although the vampire clan was rather aloof and proud like with most vampires, they were also unlike other vampires in which they don't immediately try to kill any wizard that they see. Though that might change now with all the vampire hunts going on...

"Enough!" Hilda banged the trash bag onto the ground beside the dumpster with so much force that the bag was almost torn apart. The girl turned and glared at Remus and the werewolf almost cringed at the dangerous look in her red and blue eyes. He had almost forgotten that even though Hilda is only an eleven year old child, she is still a child brought up by a royal vampire clan and is technically part vampire herself. "If you're just here to remind me just fucked up that my life has turned out to be, I don't want to hear it!" Remus could have sworn that he almost saw sparks flying out of Hilda's eyes. "I'm no longer Hilda Potter! She ceased to exist six years ago when the 'great leader of the Light' decided that it's in my 'best interests' to dump a one year old infant onto the doorsteps of her magic hating relatives who made it their mission life to make my life miserable!"

Remus nearly cringed at Hilda's sarcastic tone. He had argued and fought like anything against Dumbledore's insane decision to place Hilda with Lily's sister back then. Lily had never spoken about her sister during their time in school, but when James had proposed to her after they had finished school and he was accepted into the Auror Academy, Remus had gone with Sirius and Lily to extend the wedding invitation to Petunia. Remus had to actually hold Sirius

back from cursing Petunia to oblivion when the woman had literally tore into Lily and drove the gentle woman to tears.

Thus, Remus knew for sure that Petunia would never accept Hilda, never mind that she's her sister's child. But Dumbledore was stubborn and firmly believed that it is the best decision to put Hilda with Petunia, never mind the fact that James had actually proclaimed more than once that he would never even put an animal into the Dursleys' care. The animal would be dead within a week.

Hilda breathed deeply as she stared at Remus, beginning to calm down a little. To Remus' credit, he had never told anyone who Hilda really is, and during his Hogwarts' days, he had never done anything to Severus as well. He might have not done anything to stop Sirius and James bullying Severus, but he had never contributed anything towards it either. Even Severus admits that among the entire Marauder group, he preferred to be paired with Remus during pair work during their school days. At least he knew that he could trust Remus not to 'accidentally' blow up the cauldron during their Potions lessons or to 'accidentally' throw a hex at him when the teacher wasn't looking during Defence Against the Dark Arts lessons.

"And it might sound a little strange to you," said Hilda, calming herself down. "But I've never blamed the Dark Lord for my parents' deaths. True, the Dark Lord killed them, but it makes no difference to me whether they were killed by the Dark Lord or on the battlefield itself. It was wartime back then. People die during war. It makes no sense to hate him for something that is extremely common during wartime. I'm no longer Hilda Potter! I've already ceased to be her the moment that Ethan did the blood ritual six years ago and I became Hilda Evans!"

With that, Hilda then pushed past Remus and walked back towards the direction of Starlight's Hall, leaving behind one very stunned werewolf.

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Four hours before Hilda was due to head to King's Cross Station had a certain female vampire by the name of Jessica Falsoss paying Ethan a visit at Starlight's Hall. The vampire herself was drawing attention from all surrounding men like all female vampires do, only that her 'aura' is much more potent than the usual female vampire.

Sleek black hair fell down to her back and her crimson red eyes seemed to have the ability to mesmerise everyone around her. Her outfit consists of a skin tight white tube top with a black high collared coat with golden edges around it worn over it, with only three silver buckles holding the coat together in the middle. A black leather mini-skirt completed her outfit with a pair of thigh-high black dragon hide boots.

Ethan was frowning as he listened to what his long-time friend was telling him about some Prophecy regarding Hilda and the Dark Lord which was made when she was a mere baby. Jessica's vampire magic is otherwise known as 'scrying' and she can also melt into shadows and slip into places that she wasn't supposed to without being seen by anyone.

"So this Prophecy that you were talking about..." Ethan trailed off, and Jessica nodded, examining her nails that were kept long and well-rounded, being painted black.

"It's a fake," said Jessica, looking up at Ethan. "I've been around long enough to know when a Prophecy is fake. And the one made about Hilda and the Dark Lord is definitely a fake. And even if it isn't, as long as one party is unwilling, then the Prophecy can't come true."

"I see," said Ethan with a nod. "And Sirius Black?"

"I did some scrying and asking around," said Jessica seriously. "Like what you've suspected, Sirius Black is innocent. Pettigrew's magical threads still exists in this world, and that means that he's definitely still alive."

The vampire clan that Jessica belongs to have a long history of having the ability to see the future or past, and even fortune telling. A few even have Jessica's vampire abilities. And among their abilities is also the ability to find a wizard or witch's magical threads – the only way to track down a wizard or witch by locating their magic.

"Then if Pettigrew is still alive, without a doubt, he's the actual traitor and not Black then," said Ethan, putting two and two together, and Jessica nodded. Ethan scowled. "The no-good pathetic rat!" He

turned towards Jessica. "Was Black actually given a trial back then? I wasn't paying much attention to the wizardry community then as we were having enough problems with Orlando and his worshippers and followers then."

"Not that I know of, no," said Jessica with a frown. "Black wasn't given a trial. He was chucked straight to Azkaban, the wizard prison." Ethan scowled at this. His impression of Dumbledore is plunging even lower with everything that Jessica had just told him. Jessica studied her childhood friend before sighing. "Ethan, I know that you don't want Hilda to be involved in anything relating to the Potter line, but I also know you. You wouldn't just leave an innocent man to be punished for something that is not his fault. You have connections with people within the Ministry, don't you? Otherwise, you wouldn't be able to open a bar of this nature in the wizarding world itself."

Ethan sighed, running the fingers of his right hand through his hair. "Jess, you sure knew where to hit where it hurts the most," he grumbled, and Jessica smirked.

"My apologies."

"I'll get Lucius to see if he can get Black a fair trial," said Ethan thoughtfully. "And with any luck, he might be out of Azkaban and finding himself free by the Easter holidays. I'm not sure what Hilda would think about this though."

"Well, if Black is smart, he wouldn't be standing on the side of the man that had chucked him straight to Azkaban without even requesting for a trial held for him," said Jessica bluntly. "I think that it'll be alright." She then glanced at the clock before sliding off the stool that she was sitting on. "I guess that it's time for me to make a move. Hilda has a train to catch for school, isn't it?"

"Yeah," said Ethan, nodding absently as he looked at the clock. "She should be down soon enough."

"I see," said Jessica with a smirk before she grabbed the front of Ethan's coat and practically pulled him over the counter, and before the surprised vampire could react, Jessica clamped her lips down on his and practically stuck her tongue down his throat in a passionate kiss before drawing away. "See you, Ethan." Jessica smirked before

disappearing in a wisp of black smoke, waving cheekily at the stunned vampire.

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Platform 9¾  
King's Cross Station

Hilda and Ethan made it to King's Cross Station with ample time. Clearly, having the vampire benefits of teleporting and travelling sure makes things remarkably simple. Lyra, the head house elf at Starlight's Hall had promised to keep things running in order until Ethan can return, and the two had then set off for King's Cross Station.

Hedwig, Hilda's owl was extremely grumpy whilst being kept in her cage as the snow-white owl was rather used to freedom and being able to fly about everywhere during her past three years with Hilda, and being locked up in a cage had the immediate effect to make Hedwig rather grumpy.

"Just bear with it for awhile longer, Hedwig." Hilda told her owl whose cage was being balanced atop her trunks and stuff and things. "At least until we can get to the school."

"Hilda!"

Hilda and Ethan both turned to see Draco and his father making their way towards them with Lucius pushing a trolley on which lay all of Draco's things. The blonde boy looked rather excited as he made his way towards Hilda and Ethan.

"Hey Draco," said Hilda with a smile. "I see that you've managed to wake up on time alright." She teased, and Draco blushed.

"I'm not that bad, alright!" he defended.

Hilda laughed before her expression darkened when she saw someone over Draco's shoulder and quickly changed the subject. "Well, we'd better get onto the train," she said.

"Why? It's still early—" Draco turned around only to see just why Hilda wanted to get on the train when he spotted an entire family of

redheads not too far away from them whom hadn't noticed them yet. "Oh. Yeah, we'd better."

"Take care of yourself, Hilda. And you know how to contact me if you need to," said Ethan, giving Hilda a quick hug which surprised her as Ethan won't usually initiate contact with someone unless necessary. "And be careful of Dumbledore."

Hilda nodded as Draco was saying his goodbyes to his father next to him before the two got onto the train, but not before loading their stuff onto the train which some fifth and sixth years Hufflepuff students were kind enough to help them with.

It wasn't too difficult for Draco and Hilda to find an empty compartment as majority of the student body were still saying goodbyes to their parents. Draco and Hilda both then took a seat by the windows, engaging in small talk.

"So which house do you think that you're going to be sorted in?" asked Draco.

"I'm hoping for Ravenclaw," said Hilda with a shrug. "You?"

"Isn't it obvious?" said Draco with a smirk.

"Oh right. Slytherin, the House of Snakes," said Hilda sarcastically, and Draco grinned. "You sure made that clear enough ever since we've first met, and you accidentally found your dad's old school copy of Hogwarts: A History in your manor library."

The door slid opened just then, and Hilda brightened up as she saw that it was Hermione who was struggling with her school trunk. "Hilda!" Hermione brightened up as she saw her friend. "I thought that I saw you in here earlier." She struggled with her trunk before Draco, being the gentleman that he was, helped the bushy haired girl by loading it onto one of the luggage racks above their heads. "Thanks."

"This is my friend, Draco Malfoy by the way," said Hilda, making the necessary introductions. "Draco, this is Hermione Granger. We met when she got lost whilst buying her school supplies, and she and her parents had dropped by more than once to Starlight's Hall during the weekends." She added, explaining to Draco in indirect terms that



Hermione knew about Ethan and her home life and is okay with it. The blonde was extremely ferocious towards anyone who presumed Hilda to be dark just because of who her guardian is. Ethan had teased her more than once that Draco seems to be her 'knight in shining armour'.

"I see. Nice to meet you," said Draco, grasping Hermione's hand in a brief handshake. "Take a seat."

"Sure," said Hermione before settling down into a seat beside Hilda. "I've been reading all my school books as well as those few books that you've recommended me to read, Hilda. And Hogwarts and the magical community seem especially interesting." And Draco blinked as Hermione rattled off about all the books that she'd read which seems almost like an entire book section in Flourish and Blotts.

"You're Ravenclaw material, alright," said Draco weakly, and Hilda and Hermione both laughed.

The train started to move then, and the door slid opened once more, and all three occupants of the train looked up only to see Cedric standing there at the doorway with a handsome caramel haired teen beside him.

"Hi Hilda," said Cedric with a smile. "I wasn't expecting to see you in here. All the other compartments are full. Mind if we come in?"

"Not at all," said Hilda, and Cedric thanked her with a smile before entering the compartment, placing his trunk onto the luggage rack, with his friend doing the same thing next to him. "This is my friend, Jasper Summers, by the way. He's a Hufflepuff third year as well." Cedric introduced his friend as he sat down next to Draco after Hilda had made the necessary introductions.

The five teens then chatted back and forth, with Cedric and Jasper both being more than happy enough to fill the younger kids in about Hogwarts and what to expect. Cedric was a little more helpful than Jasper and went into extreme detail about all the teachers and the subjects in school as well as all the different ghosts in there as well the moving staircases of Hogwarts which had given many a student a great scare more than once.

The witch with the lunch trolley soon came, and they all bought some Chocolate Frogs, with Jasper buying some Sugar Quills and Bertie Botts' Every Flavour Beans. Hermione bought a little of everything especially since she had never tried food of the wizarding world before.

Hermione was chatting with Jasper about some school work which the boy was happy enough to fill her in that Hilda thought privately to herself that Jasper should have been a Ravenclaw instead of a Hufflepuff. Cedric was talking with both Hilda and Draco when suddenly, something within Draco's humongous pile of Chocolate Frogs leapt out from within the pile and landed onto his face, causing the blonde to cry out.

"OW! What is this...thing?" Draco tried to pluck 'the thing' off his face which turned out to be a toad. The sight of Draco trying to get the obviously frightened toad off his face was so hilarious that the entire compartment can't help laughing. "Stop laughing and get this thing off me!"

Hermione who was sitting next to Draco managed to stop laughing long enough to pluck the toad off Draco's face. Cedric was laughing so hard that it looks like he'll faint from the lack of oxygen soon enough, and Hilda was trying to stifle her laughter.

"Whose toad is this?" asked Jasper, having managed to stop laughing as he stared at the toad in Hermione's hand, with the bushy haired girl having a firm enough grip on the toad to stop it from running off.

Right on cue, the door slid opened once more, and everyone looked up to see a round-faced boy with his trunk at the doorway, looking extremely apologetic. "Sorry. Did anyone see a toad?"

Hermione held said toad up. "Is this the one that you're looking for?"

The boy's face brightened up. "Trevor!" he cried out in delight, taking the toad from Hermione.

Jasper smiled at the boy. "Can't find a compartment?"

The boy looked embarrassed. "Kind of," he muttered.

Hilda turned towards Draco. "Draco, move over."

Draco nodded before shifting over to make room for the new boy who sat down gratefully. "I'm Neville Longbottom, by the way," he said nervously, glancing around, almost as if half-expecting for one of them to throw him out.

The group then made the necessary introductions once more. And Cedric, sensing Neville's discomfort and nervousness, made a few small jokes and told them all about the pranks that the infamous Weasley twins had done during their years in Hogwarts which made all of them laugh a bit.

"But the best was that paint incident," said Jasper, smiling a little. "Fred and George somehow made a paint prank to colour the floor of the entire Entrance Hall pink, and Filch, the caretaker was spending days on end just cleaning it up. What he didn't know is that if he just left the paint alone, it would automatically disappear after a few hours."

Neville laughed along with Hilda, Draco and Hermione. The door slid opened again just then, and all the occupants looked up only to see a certain redhead standing at the doorway. Draco scowled so deeply that his eyebrows nearly disappeared into his hair, and he fingered his wand immediately whilst Hilda's expression darkened.

"Weasley." Draco hissed like an angry snake, looking almost ready to stand up had Hilda not shot him a look, telling him to stand down.

"I never expected to see you in here," said Ronald Weasley arrogantly, looking at both Draco and Hilda with an expression that seems like they're something that ought to be scrapped off the bottom of his shoe. "Hogwarts is too good for people like you, a sure-to-be-Slytherin, Malfoy."

"Excuse me? Exactly what is wrong with being a Slytherin?" Draco looked almost ready to lunge himself at Ron and tear the redhead to pieces. "Do you even have a brain in that oversized thing that you call a head?"

Jasper frowned at Ron. He knew of the animosity between Gryffindor and Slytherin, and the Ravensclaws and Hufflepuffs usually tend to stay out of it, being the two neutral Houses in

Hogwarts. "It's not that I don't understand your dislike for the Slytherin House, Weasley, seeing as how nearly your entire family was in Gryffindor," he said. "But you shouldn't say things like that as there are always bad apples in every House. Slytherin is just unfortunate enough to get the most of them."

Draco shot Jasper a grateful look, and Hermione and Neville were both nodding, agreeing with Jasper.

"Furthermore, if memory serves me right, your elder twin brothers have some friends in Slytherin House, don't they?" asked Cedric, remembering a conversation that he had once with the Weasley twins. "They wouldn't be pleased if they heard this conversation."

"Talk about a bunch of Dark supporters," sneered Ron, and a flash of anger flashed through Jasper and Cedric's eyes. "If you value your lives, you'd best not associate yourselves with people like them." He glanced at Draco and Hilda, with the former being restrained by both Hilda and Neville. "Especially Death Eater families and someone who lived with a blood sucker."

"Weasley." Cedric interrupted, going rather white in the face with anger, seeing that same anger reflected in the faces of everyone present. "If you're just going to come here and hurl insults at us, you'd best be leaving. I've met Ethan for myself, and he's a very nice person, despite being a vampire. He can't help who he is."

"That's right!" said Hermione, an angry expression on her face. "You shouldn't say things about people like that!"

"Hmm. Dark supporters. I never expect you to be someone like that, Diggory," said Ron with a sneer.

Hilda was silent for a long time as she studied Ron, and she broke the silence, causing attention to be placed on her. "...you've changed, Ron," she said, her hands balling into fists by her sides. "You never use to be like this."

"People change." Ron sneered. "And I'm glad that I've found out who you and your guardian are before anything bad actually happens."

"Weasley." Jasper interrupted, seeing that Draco is almost ready to leap onto Ron and start strangling him or something. "Get out of here before I hex you."

Ron sneered before leaving the compartment, closing the door behind him. And it's then that Hilda think that it's safe enough to let go of Draco who slumped down into his seat, balling his hands into fists onto his knees, gritting his teeth together.

"What a jerk," said Hermione angrily, glaring at the door of the compartment. "I can't believe that there are people like him in this world."

"Don't let it get to you," said Cedric. "His older twin brothers are alright. They're in my year, and they have friends from all Houses, not just Gryffindor alone."

"By the way, Hilda," said Hermione, turning towards Hilda. "Do you know him?"

Hilda was silent for a long time before she spoke. "Kind of."

"Huh?"

"We used to be friends," said Hilda quietly, not looking at anyone but her feet. "The best of friends, in fact. That was a long time ago. Even before I've met Draco. I was around six when I met Ron in Diagon Alley when I was running an errand for Ethan. We hit it off right away. We talked about everything under the sun. But..."

"But?"

"He...found out about Ethan being a vampire and that I was brought up by him," said Hilda with a sad smile. "And that I was even blood adopted by a vampire clan. He...said some really awful things back then."

"That's terrible!" said Neville, looking shocked, and Hermione and Cedric agreed with him.

"What does it matters even if Ethan if a vampire? He wouldn't harm anyone!" said Cedric. "Dad even likes him, and he said that Ethan is one of the nicest and kindest vampires that he'd ever met. If he

didn't know that Ethan is a vampire, he wouldn't even guess that he's one."

"That's right!" said Draco, nodding. "Ethan has helped me, my father and Sev out so many times. And so did the High Prince and the High Lord, for that matter!"

"Besides, judging people by something that they couldn't help is a very stupid thing to do." Jasper added in his input.

Hilda laughed bitterly. "Try telling that to him and his stupid family," she said. "His twin brothers are alright. They used to babysit us all the time when we were little, and they were really angry when Ron and their family did what they did back then. The oldest brother is alright as well. I think that he's a friend of Ethan's or something whom he'd met when Ethan travelled to Egypt at one time. And so is the second brother. But as for the rest of the family..." She trailed off.

Jasper sighed. "I don't even know what's wrong with the wizarding families these days," he said. "There is nothing but discrimination and scorn everywhere! It isn't right!"

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The first sight of Hogwarts with the traditional first boat ride was really beautiful. Hilda and Draco had seen what Hogwarts actually looked like from Lucius' old school books back during his Hogwarts days, but the photos don't do Hogwarts any justice.

Draco, Hermione, Neville and Hilda have all shared a boat together as it is four to one. Draco had refused to let Ron anywhere near Hilda, and as the blonde looked ready to hex the redhead, Ron had wisely decided to keep well away from the four of them.

A stern-looking witch was waiting for them when they arrived at the castle which Hermione whispered was Minerva McGonagall, the Assistant Headmistress of Hogwarts. The group of first years were then led into the Entrance Hall which is almost as large as the one back at the Levi clan's castle.

Hilda listened patiently along with every single student there as McGonagall explained about the four Houses and Hogwarts itself

before she disappeared into the Great Hall for a few moments before returning once more, leading them into the Great Hall itself.

Neville was awe-struck by the ceiling which seems to be that of the night sky, and Hermione was more than happy to inform him that it was enchanted to look like the night sky. Hilda can only shake her head slowly at this. Sure, all first years were supposed to get a copy of *Hogwarts: A History*, but the majority of them never read it unless they were muggle borns, and even then, most muggle borns don't read the entire book.

There were four long tables in the Great Hall itself which was filled with students, and McGonagall led them to a three legged chair with an old looking and patched hat sitting on the top silently. The Great Hall had silenced immensely when McGonagall had brought them in, and everyone was now staring at the hat which immediately broke out into a song.

The entire Great Hall broke out into applause when the Hat finished it's song, and McGonagall immediately unrolled a long roll of parchment with a quill in one hand. "When I call your name, come up here and sit on the stool," she said. "The Sorting Hat will then sort you into your Houses." The first years nodded dumbly. "Abbott, Hannah!"

A rather timid looking freckled auburn haired girl walked up to the stool and sat down on it as McGonagall placed the hat on her head. There was a few moments before a rip in the Hat opened which Hilda presumed was it's mouth, and the Hat shouted, "Hufflepuff!"

Everyone clapped politely, and Hannah took off the Hat and gladly ran over to the Hufflepuff table where Hilda spotted Cedric and Jasper immediately, both sitting side-by-side and clapping politely for the new addition to their House.

Hilda tuned out after the first dozen names or so, speaking quietly with Draco, Hermione and Neville, spotting Severus out of the corner of her eye eyeing their group with much amusement. Hilda was suddenly jolted back to reality when McGonagall called her name out.

"Evans, Hilda!"

Hilda stepped up, ignoring the several raised brows and curious looks because of the curious colour of her eyes, and she could have sworn that Dumbledore was eyeing her thoughtfully with a weird expression on his face as she sat down on the stool, with the Hat being dropped down onto her head which covered her eyes.

A small voice was spoken into her ear just then.

"Well well, how interesting," said the Hat. "Dumbledore and more than half of the wizarding community in Britain have spent years searching for you, Ms Potter. I wonder what Dumbledore will say when he realises that he had Hilda Potter under his nose all this time, only under the wrong name."

Hilda scowled inwardly. 'Say one word to anyone at all, and I'll rip you up,' she threatened.

"I won't. I rather like the way I am now. And besides, I'm honour bound by the pact that I made with the Hogwarts Four to keep all thoughts that I see in the heads of students to myself," said the Hat hastily. "But very interesting though. Being raised by a vampire and adopted by the royal vampire clan of the eastern territory of vampire lands. No wonder Dumbledore is so interested in you, especially since it isn't often that you have a vampire raising a human child."

'Can we please carry on with the Sorting?' Hilda thought impatiently.

"Very well. Being raised by Ethan Nightwing had quite an effect on your personality and character, it seems like," said the Hat thoughtfully. "Gryffindor is definitely out of the question though, Ms Evans. You lack the rashness and hot-headedness that most Gryffindors seem to have. You have the courage that all Gryffindors have, but you hate the spotlight. So no Gryffindor, it seems like."

'Thank goodness,' thought Hilda with a sigh. Gryffindor is the last House that she wished to be in. She has no wish to face Ronald Weasley every single time that she's in class or when she's out of classes. Having to see him once or twice is already more than enough for her.

"Hufflepuff is also a no-go for you. You are loyal, yes, but while you would stick up for and stand up for your friends, there are also times when you would leave them to fend for themselves if you think that it



might help them in the long run," said the Hat. "An attribute contributed by the Nightwing clan, no doubt." Hilda winced slightly. "So no Hufflepuff either. You are clever and quite resourceful, having a quick wit and mind. But you lack that cunningness that all Slytherins seem to possess. Dear Salazar will be so disappointed. He'll love to have you in his House. If the founders are still alive now, Helga will be quite amused, Godric will be laughing himself until he faints from the lack of air, Salazar will be sulking by himself in a corner and Rowena will be gleeful for a month. So better be..."

"RAVENCLAW!"

Upcoming Stories:

Of Magic and Spirits (Harry Potter)

AU FemHarry. Remus defied against Dumbledore's wishes by calling his old friend, Ryuken Ishida, and asking him to take care of his best friend's daughter by raising one Hilda Potter as Uryuu Ishida's younger twin sister. Bleach/HP crossover

## Chapter Five: First Day at Hogwarts

Forbidden Forest  
Hogwarts School

It was extremely late at night when Hilda entered the Forbidden Forest, but not before 'blending' in with the shadows and the darkness with usage of vampire magic which Ethan had taught her throughout the years.

All vampires can blend in together with the darkness and the shadows so that the normal human eye can't see them. With that type of ability, the vampires do not require the usage of Invisibility Cloaks to make themselves invisible.

Technically, Hilda is part vampire thanks to the blood ritual that Elton had used on her years ago when Ethan had first brought her to his father and brother, and she knew that the Centaurs of Hogwarts and the other creatures will be aware of her existence by now.

The Sorting earlier had Hermione being sorted into Ravenclaw alongside her whilst Draco went to Slytherin like he wished to be and Neville ended up in Gryffindor. The poor boy looked extremely nervous as Ron Weasley looked extremely murderous, but fortunately for Neville, the Weasley twins took it upon themselves to take the boy in under their wing.

After walking into the Forest for some time, Hilda stopped and called out to nothing in particular.

"Centaurs of Hogwarts. Are you here?"

There was silence for several moments before there was the sound of light clip-clopping of what seemed to be hooves, and three Centaurs appeared before her. Hilda eyed them carefully before nodding to them politely; showing them respect yet telling them that she is part of a family that do not bow to others unnecessarily.

Vampires are a race of extremely proud beings. Even Ethan admits that even he wouldn't lower himself to actually bow to others unless one gives him a very good reason to do so. Extremely nice vampire or not, it still doesn't change the fact that Ethan is a vampire, and was raised as the secondary heir of the Eastern vampire clan. And

thus, he has all the mannerisms, behaviours and cultures of vampire society practically drilled into his head by his father.

"What are your names?" asked Hilda in a soft tone, not betraying anything with her voice.

The first Centaur which seemed to be the leader grunted and spoke first. "Bane."

The second which had a rather friendly face nodded to Hilda politely and spoke. "Firenze," he said.

The last Centaur stayed silent, but eyed Hilda carefully.

"May we know your name?" asked Bane sharply. "We'd sensed a presence that seemed to be part human and part vampire, and we'll prefer to know if you will bring danger to Hogwarts and its inhabitants."

Hilda sighed. "Hilda Evans," she said. "Ward of the Nightwing clan, the Eastern vampire clan."

The eyebrows of both Bane and Firenze rose and even the third Centaur looked on with interest. "So you're the one that Ethan spoke of," said Firenze quietly. When he noted Hilda's look, he smiled. "We met him during the last war. He helped us out a lot."

Hilda nodded. "May I ask a favour?"

Bane nodded. "Speak."

Hilda sighed. "Ethan told me of a few students who aren't...exactly human, or they are part human," she said hesitantly. "In order to live among humans, they each have to use Concealment Potions whilst they are at school to pass off as humans. But there are times throughout the school year when their non-human blood is at their strongest when even the potions can't conceal their identity and they have to...transform."

The Centaurs nearly winced at that. They knew what Hilda meant. There are some magical creatures like the elves which is a nearly extinct race. Their elf blood is extremely potent, and actually using Concealment Potions hurts them a lot, but it isn't like they have a

choice. But there are times when even the potions can't help them, and they have to 'transform' back into their elf forms.

There is currently an elf posing as a student in the school, and the Centaurs had heard the poor boy cry out in pain hundreds of times during his school years when he seek refuge in the Forbidden Forest during his 'transformation'.

"You want to make sure they have a safe place where they can be themselves," said Firenze softly, putting together the pieces.

Hilda nodded. "I can make one myself with vampire magic and wards so that the teachers at the school and the Ministry don't detect anything." She sighed, running her fingers through her hair. "Merlin knows that I need one myself too." She muttered.

Bane nodded solemnly. "Very well," he said. "We will grant your request. The Centaurs will keep your friends safe."

Hilda nodded to them politely. "Thank you," she said. "You have my thanks."

"No thanks necessary," said Bane curtly. "Come Firenze. We have to return and inform the others of this."

Firenze nodded, and within moments, the three Centaurs were gone.

Hilda sighed before a magical presence hit her senses, and she turned to see a third year Gryffindor looking extremely nervous making his way towards her. Even under the moonlight, Hilda can see that he looked extremely pale, and she sighed.

"Hey Oliver. It's been awhile," she said, and Oliver Wood nodded to her.

The two have been friends ever since Oliver was a first year in Hogwarts, and his father had taken the boy to Starlight's Hall to see Ethan for some way to pass Oliver off as a human. It is part of Britain's wizarding laws that no non-human is allowed to attend a wizarding school which had been passed after Cornelius Fudge had become Minister.

Personally, Hilda found the laws stupid. With all the stupid laws passing about non-humans and part humans and those that were ostracised by the wizarding community, Hilda will be very surprised that a war of some sort hadn't broken out yet. In fact, she suspected that it may be partly due to this that Voldemort even started the war in the first place.

"My dad told me that you're a first year here," said Oliver, smiling tentatively at Hilda. She was his only friend who knew what he really is, and also the only person who he can be himself around.

Hilda nodded and took out a potion vial from within her pocket before handing it to Oliver. "That should sustain your form for about two months," she said. "Tell me via owl mail once you've run out. I do not want you getting ostracised by your fellow House mates just because of me."

Oliver nodded before unscrewing the cork of the potion vial and took a gulp. The potion took effect almost immediately, and his colour returned to his cheeks. "Thanks Hilda," he said. "For everything."

Hilda nodded.

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The next morning had Hilda stabbing at her breakfast absent-mindedly with her fork, with her chin resting on the palm of her left hand. Hermione was sitting next to her reading some novel whilst a girl who shared the same dorm with Hermione and Hilda (Ravenclaw's dorms are shared with three to a dorm) named Padma Patil was on Hilda's other side.

No one in Ravenclaw had any misgivings about Hilda being brought up by a vampire save for some of the narrow minded individuals, and said individuals are sixth years. Cedric and Jasper have both told them that Ravenclaw and Hufflepuff are two of the neutral Houses in Hogwarts, and do not hold much discrimination for others.

"What are you reading, Hermione?" asked Hilda, glancing over to her friend. It was still early, and she is ready to bet that Draco is probably still in bed. Hilda raised a brow as she noted the book title and blinked. "Dracula?"

"Yeah," said Hermione with a nod, looking over her book at Hilda. "You got me interested in vampires after having met Ethan, and my mum picked this book out for me."

Hilda snorted. She had read the book once, and wasn't very impressed with the author for her own reasons. "I wonder what Lord Alucard would say when he reads that," she muttered, taking a sip from her pumpkin juice.

Hermione blinked. "Alucard?" she echoed.

"Dracula."

"You mean Dracula is real?"

"Yeah," said Hilda with a nod. "He's about the oldest vampire in existence. He's Jessica's grandfather, a friend of Ethan who lived somewhere in Romania. I met him when I was a kid after Ethan had...taken me in." She coughed. "He's...pretty nice, if a bit eccentric. And then again, most vampires are. Lord Alucard told me about Bram Stoker. Apparently, there were some issues with them both, and Bram Stoker...exaggerated the details a little in his book."

Hermione raised a brow. "I don't think that I even want to know," she drawled.

Soon, the Charms professor came and started giving out time-tables. Hilda took hers and studied it carefully and saw that she had Potions with Gryffindor, and she nearly groaned at that. There will literally be fireworks with both her and Ronald Weasley in the same class. On the other hand, they had Charms with Slytherin, and she was glad that she at least has classes with most of her friends in it.

"Hilda."

Hilda glanced up only to see Draco sliding into the seat next to her, ignoring the odd glances that the rest of the school gave them, a rather nervous looking Neville with him which Hermione is quick to drag into the seat beside her.

"You got your time-table yet?" asked Hilda.

"Yeah," said Draco. He then studied Hilda's time-table and blinked before he burst into laughter. "I'll love to see both you and Weasley in the same class!"

Hilda scowled at her best friend whilst Hermione squealed with laughter and even Neville grinned whilst Padma tried to hide her amusement by hiding her face behind her goblet of pumpkin juice.

"It's not funny!"

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An hour later, the four first years parted ways: with Draco to the Transfiguration classroom whilst Hermione, Hilda and Neville headed towards the dungeons where the Potions classroom was located. Several of the Gryffindors were glaring at Hermione and Hilda, but the two girls ignored it.

Fortunately for them, the door of the classroom swung opened just then, and there stood Professor Severus Snape in all his glory, with a scowl on his face.

"Get inside, and not a word."

The Ravenclaws and Gryffindors all filed in quietly as Severus walked up to his desk with his cloak billowing behind him, and Hilda wondered if he is a vampire of some sort. It isn't that difficult to believe with Severus' dark hair and his manner of dressing, and she would have believed that if Severus' eyes aren't red.

Hermione and Hilda have both seated themselves on the Ravenclaw side of the classroom at one of the benches somewhere in the middle, with Hermione carefully positioning herself so that she is blocking most of the glares from the Gryffindors. And over at the Gryffindor side, Neville Longbottom who had the misfortune to end up with Ronald Weasley as seatmates was smiling apologetically at them both which both girls returned.

"There will be no foolish wand waving in my class," said Severus curtly. "I will teach you the subtle art of potion making. You could brew glory, bottle fame or even put a stopper on death. But first, I would like to make some rules extremely clear." He made an emphasis on the 'clear'. "First of all; follow my instructions at all

times. If you don't, I will not be at all surprised to find that you've lost a few limbs due to a badly made potion—" At this point, several of the students turned extremely green. "—and even if you don't, I will be more than happy to throw you out of my classroom head-first. In this classroom, it's my rules. Finally; absolutely no destruction of other potions. I do not care even if you are the best of friends or mortal enemies. You will carry your fight somewhere else and you will absolutely not have your own private war in my classroom! Is that clear, Mr Weasley?"

Everyone jumped as Severus raised his voice, and the mentioned Weasley jumped about a foot in the air from where he had been glaring at Hilda, or trying should be the word as Hermione is sitting in his view of sight, and so is Neville.

"Yes sir." Ron gritted out.

Hilda's lips twitched slightly, trying to control her laughter whilst Hermione turned her laugh into a loud hacking cough. Severus turned towards them both with an odd expression on his face, yet Hilda can tell that he's fairly amused.

"Do you need to go to the hospital wing, Miss Granger?" asked Severus politely, feigning concern.

"No sir."

Ron chuckled silently to himself, but unfortunately for the redhead, Severus caught it.

"Five points from Gryffindor, Mr Weasley."

"Five points! That's not fair, you—"

"Finish that sentence, and you'll be serving detention with me for a week," said Severus coldly. "In fact, make that another five points from Gryffindor. And if you do not want more points taken away, you'll keep quiet."

Ron looked furious, but kept quiet as well as kept his head down, determinedly looking away from Hilda which she is thankful for. She does not fancy having to put up with Ron's glare boring holes into



the back of her head whilst she brewed whatever potion that Severus wanted them to do in class that day.

Not that she is bad in Potions. No.

Severus had given Draco and herself several Potions lessons when they were younger, and Hilda has to know how to brew certain potions for the bar. Though she mostly brewed the easier potions like the healing potions and the Dreamless Sleep potions to lessen Severus' workload. Advanced potions like the Wolfsbane and the Concealment Potion are made by Severus.

Ron ignored Hilda for the rest of the class whilst Severus set the class to make a simple potion which is a cure for boils which Hilda can probably make with her eyes closed as she'd made those so many times throughout the years. Hermione was nervous as this was her first potion making attempt, but she soon relaxed when Hilda told her that potion making is a lot like cooking.

Severus had used that same terminology with Draco when the blonde had blown up his second cauldron in a week during that first week of Potions lessons with Severus and Hilda. After that, the blonde had surprisingly asked for some cooking lessons from one of his family house elves that had taken care of him ever since Draco was a baby.

Lucius and Narcissa were both surprised, but rather pleased at this. As unlike contrary belief, the Malfoys are not a bigoted pureblood family. Sure, they still held onto some of their pureblood beliefs and traditions, but they do not believe that their blood makes them superior and all-powerful. If they do, they wouldn't have even bothered associating themselves with Ethan and Hilda and the few Muggle-born witches and wizards who were friends of the vampire society and were invited to every Samhain festival each year.

As for Dobby, the house elf which is Draco's favourite, the poor house elf literally had a heart attack when Draco had asked him of this as he had never seen his young master even bothering to do even the simplest house chores. It takes him so much to even do something as small as make his own bed.

Narcissa used to scold Draco all the time for this as he is literally giving their poor house elves more work to do until Draco had met

Hilda and assisted her with her work and chores at Starlight's Hall before the blonde started doing little house chores around the Malfoy mansion on his own.

And to make a long story short, Dobby had taught Draco several simple dishes which coincidentally are also Mistress Malfoy's favourite dishes which Draco usually made himself with no assistance from the house elves whatsoever on his mother's birthdays. Sure, it isn't as delicious as what Dobby or any of the house elves could make, but Narcissa is always so happy whenever Draco made a cake or a dish for her.

Hilda carefully positioned herself so that her back is facing the Gryffindors' table when they were brewing their potions over their cauldrons, with Hermione paired with her. Hermione was rather nervous, reading and re-reading the instructions over and over, and Hilda blamed it on Severus' rather harsh introduction earlier.

Ravenclaws are usually a studious bunch and they rarely make mistakes with their work, but there are a few like Hermione who lacked confidence in their own work, and those few usually tend to be Muggle-borns or witches or wizards who are considered outcasts in their families.

In the end, Hilda told Hermione that she'll do the major part of the potion whilst Hermione will just prepare the ingredients and watch the fire whilst she watches how Hilda does the potion which Hermione agreed to.

Just when the potion was turning a pretty orange colour which indicates that their potion is nearly ready, Hilda's sharp hearing – thanks to her vampire blood – caught the sound of very faint sizzling like something is burning, and she turned sharply only to hear that the sound came from the cauldron that Neville and Ron were both using. Ron is currently stirring the potion furiously whilst Neville is meekly preparing the ingredients, and Hilda's eyes widened as she noticed that the potion had turned a sickly green colour without even Ron noticing – a sure sign of the potion having gone horribly wrong.

"Hilda?" Hermione blinked.

"Hermione, take cover!" Hilda shouted, alerting the entire class as well as Severus who was currently inspecting Padma's potion as

she immediately dived at a surprised Neville who was handing a couple of potions ingredients to Ron, knocking the surprised boy to the ground and shielding him with her body.

And just in time too as there was an extremely loud sizzling sound, and several of the Gryffindors looked a tad bit worried, and several of the smarter Ravenclaws quickly performed a simple shielding charm on themselves just before Ron's cauldron exploded, splattering everyone near him with the potion, causing several severe burns on their person, and the entire classroom was instantly filled with smoke.

Hermione coughed, trying to get the smoke out of her lungs. She had been one of the Ravenclaws faster on the uptake by casting a simple shielding charm that she had found in one of her school books that she'd read during the summer.

Hermione heard Professor Snape's angry voice mutter a spell, and within moments, the smoke in the classroom immediately dispersed as well as the strong smell that seemed to smell of burnt meat and stale water.

Hermione looked up immediately, and her eyes widened as she saw a worried Neville hovering over Hilda on the ground, shaking her gently, and Hermione's sharp eyes noted several burnt patches of skin on Hilda's body, and several parts of her school robes were burned as well.

"Oh my god!" Hermione muttered, running over to Hilda immediately, and practically the entire class looked on in curiosity. "Hilda!"

"Get away from her, Miss Granger," said a gruff voice which sounded a tad bit concerned, and Hermione looked up in surprise only to see Severus bending slightly over her, running a quick check over her unconscious friend who had most likely been knocked out cold because of the earlier explosion.

"Great Merlin..." Severus muttered before bending down and scooping Hilda into his arms, and Hermione noted that the left sleeve of Hilda's robes was nearly completely burned off, and so was the skin beneath the robes. Severus turned to a frightened and worried-looking Neville who was looking at Hilda as if he thought that Hilda might wake up if he did that.

"Longbottom, follow me to the hospital wing. You need to get those burns looked at." Neville blinked before noticing the burn on the back of his right hand. "All those who were drenched by the potion, follow me to the hospital wing. As for the rest of you, finish up your potion and place a vial of it on my desk before leaving. And be sure to clean up before you go! As for you, Mr Weasley..."

Ron gulped as Severus glared at him with a murderous look. And if looks could kill, he'll be dead a hundred times over.

"Did you not read the instructions on the board properly, and did you not hear me tell the rest of the class to stir your potion slowly in an anti-clockwise direction five times?" Ron gulped and could not find it in himself to look at his Potions master's enraged expression. Hermione and Neville would have both found it funny had they both not be so worried about Hilda. "You will serve detention with me for a week every single evening, and I want you to write an essay on the do's and don'ts of safety and behaviour in a Potions classroom as well as the history, ingredients and the step-by-step procedure of the potion that we're doing today. Hand it to me by tomorrow morning, and I want it to be twenty inches long!"

Ron nearly blanched.

But Severus was already sweeping out of the Potions classroom with several Gryffindor and Ravenclaw students tagging meekly after him, all with some visible injury on their bodies.

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Apart from Hilda, all those who were injured in the 'Potions fiasco' as the Ravenclaws were calling it were given some potion to treat their burns before being allowed to leave the hospital wing. Hilda, on the other hand, was kept in by Madam Pomfrey, the school nurse even after she's woken up as she suffered the most injuries, having been the nearest to the cauldron when it had exploded.

Hermione and Neville have both dropped in just after Transfiguration for a quick visit before heading off for their next lesson, with Hermione promising to lend Hilda her own notes. Cedric and Jasper both came by as well as the two third years only have three lessons

scheduled in the morning, and they weren't amused by the danger that Hilda had put herself in by protecting Neville.

I mean, who would have known what the potion would have done? Jasper muttered something about the Sorting Hat putting Hilda in the wrong House. With that reckless behaviour, she should have been a Gryffindor instead.

Draco is the worst as he looked as pale as a sheet when he came into the hospital wing after his Potions lesson. And Neville's hysterical message to him doesn't help any matters especially since his message was, 'Hilda was critically wounded in a Potions accident when Weasley's cauldron exploded and she is now in the hospital wing'.

At lunchtime later that day, Hilda could be seen making her way towards the Ravenclaw table in the Great Hall with the eyes of everyone on her, and she is honestly not surprised. She had bandages around her upper left arm all the way to the palm of her left arm as well as bandages around her neck and forehead. All in all, she looked as if she had just come out of World War Two with a bulls-eye's target painted on her back.

Hermione and Padma were gaping at Hilda as she sat down in between the two girls. And Draco and Neville who were both sitting at the Ravenclaw table were both gaping as well. And so were Cedric and Jasper. Unlike Gryffindor and Slytherin, the Ravenclaw and Hufflepuff students doesn't mind if students from other Houses sit at their tables.

"Are you sure that you're okay?" asked Cedric hesitantly, looking Hilda up and down.

"Are you sure that you're well enough to come out of the hospital wing?" asked Hermione with concern.

"I'm fine," said Hilda, reassuring her friends. "Madam Pomfrey fixed me up. I should be able to get the bandages off in a week or so. But no strenuous activities for a week." She struggled with her cutlery with only one hand. She sighed. "Great. First day of school and in the hospital wing already. That must break a record."

Everyone laughed.

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The first week of school was pretty interesting.

Apparently, Snape was so annoyed with Ron's Potions disaster during his first lesson that he ended up pairing a Ravenclaw named Terry Boot with Ron whilst Terry's Potions partner Anthony Goldstein was paired with Neville. Both Ravenclaws were pretty competent Potions brewers and would probably do wonders for the two Gryffindors who are pretty bad at Potions.

Ron simply because he lacked common sense, and Neville because he is scared of Snape and his no-nonsense attitude as well as his strictness. And Terry also happens to be one of the more cool-headed Ravenclaws and also happens to be one of Hilda's good friends, and he won't be bullied into anything by Ron and could at least make sure that Ron's potion doesn't explode again.

The teachers by now were used to the fact that Neville, Draco, Cedric and Jasper would often be found sitting at the Ravenclaw table during mealtimes, and they were also often found in the Ravenclaw common room. Likewise, Padma, Hilda and Hermione were also welcomed in the Hufflepuff and Slytherin common rooms.

The Hufflepuffs are usually quite friendly to everyone – including Slytherins. And the Slytherins usually don't mind the Hufflepuffs and Ravenclaws as they were the only students of the school who are nice to them, though it took Draco a major bit of convincing to allow his fellow Slytherins to allow Neville into their common room as well. As long as none of them would share the passwords of the common rooms with anyone, it was okay with the other students.

The group had also accepted a Padma Patil into their group – the Ravenclaw who shared a dorm with Hermione and Hilda. Apparently, Padma's twin Parvati was in Gryffindor House, and like nearly all the Gryffindor first years, Parvati was convinced that Hilda and her friends were 'evil' thanks to the outrageous lies that Ron Weasley had been spreading around. And just because Padma was friends with Hilda and Hermione, Parvati had told Padma to her face that she never wanted to see or talk to her again.

Hilda had actually found Padma crying her eyes out in the girls' toilet on the second floor after that, and it took both Hermione and Hilda nearly three hours to calm Padma down and to convince her to come out of the toilet. And it ended up in all three Ravenclaws missing History of Magic because of that, though Professor Binns, being who he is, didn't even notice that three students are missing from his class.

Ever since then, Padma could always be found together with them. Even Professors Sprout and Snape have allowed Neville to sleep in one of the first year boys' dormitories in their individual Houses as the timid boy was too much afraid of the members of his own House to even sleep in his own dorm room now.

Not that anyone could blame him.

Poor Neville even lost his own pet toad the third day of school, and he found it dead on his bed later that night. Draco and Padma have to comfort the poor boy as Hermione and Hilda weren't around then, and the two were really angry as they were fairly sure that Neville's dorm-mates have something to do with it.

Professor Sprout who is really fond of Neville and who knew his grandmother as well was really angry as well, but could do nothing as there is no evidence that prove that Neville's dorm-mates were behind that cruel prank.

In fact, Neville is seriously considering asking Professor McGonagall to allow him to be re-sorted at the end of the year as practically the entire Gryffindor House save for a few individuals were all up in arms against the poor boy. He had heard from his grandmother about there being some rule in Hogwarts that a student can only asked to be re-sorted at the end of the year.

The group had also befriended three Slytherin first years by the names of Theodore Nott, Blaise Zabini and Daphne Greengrass when those three came across Draco and Padma trying to comfort an upset Neville in the Slytherin common room after the boy had found his dead toad. Blaise and Daphne whose fathers were the best friends of Draco's father during their Hogwarts days were extremely angry when they heard about that cruel prank and had disappeared for the rest of the evening.

The next day, nearly the entire school were wondering why Ronald Weasley, Seamus Finnegan and Dean Thomas were wearing robes with orange and black stripes on it with words on the back which read 'I'm a good lil' princess!' with the words changing colours every now and then. Professor McGonagall wasn't pleased with them and docked thirty points off Gryffindor for this 'joke'.

In fact, Hilda had a suspicion that Daphne is the brains behind this 'prank' as she knew that the girl is fairly competent in Charms, being paired with her during Charms lesson whilst Hermione was paired with Draco.

Hilda loved all her classes save for Defence Against the Dark Arts which is a bit of a joke as she can barely understand what Professor Quirrell is saying due to all his stuttering. And speaking of that stuttering professor, Hilda somehow felt that his stuttering is fake, and the man had a weird aura around him as well. Hilda's favourite lessons were Charms, Potions and Transfiguration, and the teachers of those lessons were fond of her as well.

She had written an extremely long letter at the end of the first week to Ethan, with Hedwig carrying her letter back to Ethan back at Knockturn Alley, also asking the vampire about the bar and if he can manage it without her. Seriously, Hilda also thinks that it's time that Ethan really starts looking for an assistant that they can trust to help them with the bar.

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Ethan,

How are you? Sorry that it took me this long to write, but several things have happened which rendered it nearly impossible. First of all, you can rest assured about Dumbledore. He has been quiet...so far, and I highly doubt that even Dumbledore would risk angering the Eastern vampire clan.

Anyway, I'm sorted into Ravenclaw along with Hermione, but I bet that you already knew that already, Ethan. Ron has been keeping well out of my way, though I suppose it has to do more with Draco's ferocious glares whenever he so much as venture ten feet near me.



I've also made a few new friends. Padma Patil, Daphne Greengrass, Blaise Zabini and Theodore Nott are their names. Oh, and not to forget Jasperander Summers. They're all pretty nice, and apart from Jasper, all of them are first years as well, with Padma being mine and Hermione's dorm-mate, and the other three are Slytherins. Jasper is Cedric's best friend, and we kind of met him on the train to Hogwarts.

How are things with Starlight's Hall? If things really become too much for you to handle, maybe you should really consider hiring an assistant. I know that it isn't easy to find one, but you don't really have a choice especially now that I'm in school. I know that several of our customers have difficulty in finding jobs because of what they are. Maybe you could ask them if they would like to work for us. For one, we know what they are, and it didn't really bother us. And we could always use an extra hand. The house elves can't really help us with several of the things that we have to do at the bar.

Also, I'm not sure if Severus did tell you about this, but assuming that he didn't, please don't freak out when I tell you this. There has been a little accident during my first Potions lesson when Ron's cauldron exploded because of a badly made potion, and it landed me in the hospital wing on my first day with first degree burns. But Madam Pomfrey fixed me back up, and I've just gotten the bandages removed yesterday which is why I can only write to you today.

The lessons here are really interesting! I'm glad that I've decided to come here! Sure, there are a few individuals here that are less than pleasant, but the pros outweigh the cons. I'll be back for the Christmas holidays! Tell the house elves and everyone that I said hi.

I'm looking forward to the Christmas holidays.

Love,

Hilda

Ethan looked up from Hilda's letter with a soft sigh. It was nearly closing hour for Starlight's Hall, and the house elves were all busy doing the cleaning up whilst Lucius and Amos were both currently sitting at the bar counter having their usual drink.

"Letter from Hilda?" asked Amos with a raised brow and Ethan nodded.

"By the way, Lucius. I need a favour from you," said Ethan, and Lucius raised a brow. Ethan sighed. "A friend of mine paid me a visit awhile ago. She is the High Priestess from one of the vampire clans in Romania. We – that is, as in Jessica and me have reason to believe that Sirius Black is innocent of his crime."

Amos nearly choked on his drink whilst Lucius raised a brow.

"I see," said Lucius. "And what do you want me to do?"

Ethan sighed. "I can't believe that she's making me do this," he muttered beneath his breath. "I would like you to help me get a fair trial for one Sirius Black. If he is innocent, I won't have an innocent man jailed unfairly. And if he is guilty...well, you can just chuck him back to Azkaban."

Lucius raised a brow but nodded. Even he found it difficult to believe that Sirius Black betrayed the Potters back then. He knew the young man during his Hogwarts days, despite the fact that he is three years older than him. He knew how loyal to his friends that the young man is. If there is anyone who is a traitor within his friends, he would have believed it to be Peter Pettigrew.

Definitely not Sirius Black!

Even his own wife admits that she doesn't think that her cousin will do anything like that. Sirius Black doesn't have a single dishonest bone in his body. He takes loyalty to another different meaning.

Lucius nodded. "Very well," he said. "I'll speak to the Minister myself and get him to give Black a fair trial."

Ethan nodded. "Thank you."

A/N: How is this chapter? Good or bad? Also, I would prefer it if you could give me any suggestions about a name for Hilda and her friends. I mean, I can't keep calling them 'the group' all the time! Any suggestions for group namings? Also, would you like Neville to be in a different House from his second year onwards?

Anyway, I hope that you like this chapter, and please read and review!

### Upcoming Stories:

#### A New Family, A New Life (Harry Potter)

AU FemHarry. What if Voldemort did die during the attack at Godric Hollow when Lily and James Potter killed him mere moments before breathing their last? Wizing up to Dumbledore's schemes, Hilda's grandfather, Lord Jasperander Potter put his foot down and stood up to Dumbledore. Charlie/FemHarry

#### Of Blood and Magic (Harry Potter)

FemHarry. After the war, Hilda Potter was betrayed by the very side that she was fighting for and was nearly killed by the people who was her once comrades. With help from Hermione and Ron, she fled to America along with Draco and Luna where they resided in the rainy town of Forks. Twilight/HP crossover

#### Of Magic and Spirits (Harry Potter)

AU FemHarry. Remus defied against Dumbledore's wishes by calling his old friend, Ryuken Ishida, and asking him to take care of his best friend's daughter by raising one Hilda Potter as Uryuu Ishida's younger twin sister. Bleach/HP crossover

#### Silence, the Loudest Sound (Prince of Tennis)

All of Rikkaidai Fuzoku, the boys' tennis team especially were excited when they heard that the famous Princess of Tennis would be coming to their school and joining the boys' tennis team after having disappeared from the professional tennis scene for six months. But what Rikkaidai and everyone didn't know is that the Princess of Tennis can't speak. FemRyo

#### SIS: Special Intelligence Squad (Naruto)

AU FemNaru. The Fourth never died, and the Kyuubi never attacked. What would life be like for Namikaze Hikari in a reality where she is the daughter of the Fourth Hokage and a member of the SIS, the

Special Intelligence Squad that investigate all ninja affairs? Hikari is three years older than the Rookie 9.

## Chapter Six: Halloween

He has been in this darkness for a long time now.

Darkness...

It was everywhere around him.

It is enough to drive a man insane.

How long has he been in here?

Judging by the strokes that he made on the wall as each day passes; he had to be in here for at least a good ten years or so by now.

Lily. James. Remus. Hilda.

Those names were always resounding around in his head, particularly the last one. How is she doing now? Who is she living with? The Longbottoms? They were a relatively nice family, and Lily did name her best friend Alice Longbottom as godmother to her one and only daughter.

His ears pricked up just then as he heard the sound of light footsteps. Extremely light footsteps like someone who is trying not to let his footsteps be heard. In a place as quiet as this, even the lightest sound could be magnified ten times.

Then the whispers could be heard not far away from where he is currently in.

"Here it is," said a voice that he found rather familiar, though for the life of him, he simply couldn't remember where he had heard it. "You only have ten minutes, Ethan. Ten minutes is all that I could get for you from the Minister. He thinks that Narcissa is the one who had wanted to speak to her cousin. But as official reports stated that he is a dangerous criminal, I can only get ten minutes for you."

Ethan...

Who is that?

He didn't hear anything for a few moments before he almost jumped out of his skin as a cool hand touched his skin. How did anyone get in here without him sensing them? And scratch that, how did they even get in here in the first place?

He opened his eyes only to meet mesmerising red eyes with a look of concern in them. With the pitch black darkness that surrounded him 24/7, it'll be a wonder if he can even see anything but pitch black darkness.

"Just bear with it for awhile longer," said the stranger in a cool and calming voice, and it had the instant effect to calm his mind down immediately. "I'll have you out of here soon enough. I know that you are innocent. I'll have you with Hilda soon. You'll like that, won't you?"

Hilda...

That name alone had him grabbing onto this stranger's cloaked arm which felt cold even through the fabric which he found odd for a moment, but didn't give much thought into it. His voice cracked as he hadn't used it for over ten years.

"Hilda? Do you know her? How is she doing? Is she alright? Is she fine?"

"She's with me," said the stranger simply. "Don't worry, she's doing fine. As fine as a child her age could do anyway. I can't tell you more than that as she didn't even know about you yet. Once she comes home for the Christmas holidays, then I'll let her know. I should have you out of here around Christmas time too. It'll be a nice Christmas present for you both."

"Holidays?" His voice sounded slurred, almost like he didn't even know what that word means. A smile, one that hadn't been seen on his face for almost a decade, and which once upon a time could send many a young lady to faint, appeared on his face. "I see. She's in Hogwarts now, isn't she? I've sure missed out a lot on her life."

"Ethan, hurry!" The first voice from earlier hissed.

The stranger turned back towards him. "I have to go now," he said simply, patting him on the hand. "I'll have you out of here soon enough. Can you last out until then?"

"I've been in here for almost a decade," he said, his voice cracking up and sounding hoarse because he hadn't used it for such a long time. "What is a few months more compared to over ten years? I'll wait. I'll wait until I can see Hilda again. Until I can face James and Lily and tell them proudly that I've never betrayed them. Until I can catch that rat with my own hands and kill him myself. Until I can get Albus Dumbledore myself and tell him what I think of him for throwing me in here without a trial when that lemon sucking so-and-so knew that I'm not the Secret Keeper! Until I can face Remus again and call him 'brother' once more. Until I can see Hilda again and tell her how proud her parents would be of her. Until then... Until then, I can last until then. I'll wait."

"Good," said the stranger in a calming tone, patting his hand. "Just hang on for awhile longer. I'll have you out of here soon enough." He got to his feet. "I'm Ethan Nightwing. Guardian of your little goddaughter."

He blinked. Guardian? Then what had happened to the Longbottoms?

"Wait. Isn't Hilda supposed to be with Alice and Frank? What had happened to them? Just...just what had happened during these past ten years?"

"I'll tell you everything once you're a free man," said Ethan, his back facing him. "Many things have happened. I promise. I'll tell you everything. Just for Hilda's sake at least. Hold out until then. Sirius Black."

And then he was gone.

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Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry  
Scotland

"I'll kill them." Draco seethed, one hand curling into a fist.

"I know."

"They're so dead."

"I know that, but at least wait until I can repair Nev's books," said Hilda irritably, hard at work at repairing Neville's torn and tattered books with a roll of tape beside her.

The group of them which most of the Hogwarts' inhabitants had taken to nicknaming them 'Zeus' as each of them are as temperamental as the weather were currently in the Slytherin common room, with all of them sitting at the table near the fire.

Hilda, Padma and Hermione were sharing one couch, with Draco and Neville taking the other. Jasper and Cedric were taking another couch, with Daphne, Theodore and Blaise taking another couch. And currently, a mountain of books was on the table before them, and Hilda, Jasper, Cedric and Daphne were all helping to repair Neville's books.

It had happened that evening after dinner.

And really, it wasn't really Neville's fault as he returned to his dormitory after dinner that day only to find all his books torn and tattered beyond recognition, and he immediately guessed it as the handiwork of the boys in his dormitory or some of the other Gryffindors.

To Neville's credit, he didn't cry or anything. He merely gathered all his damaged books as well as the loose pages of the books quietly, and with help from a third year Gryffindor by the name of Oliver Wood, he had headed straight towards the Slytherin common group where he was supposed to meet his friends at. And this is where it can find them all at present.

Cedric sighed as he looked at the miserable Gryffindor, trying to piece Neville's Transfiguration book back together. The whole lot of them were trying to fix Neville's books as best as they could so that the teachers do not rail at Neville for letting his books get into this condition.



"Neville, this is way getting out of hand," said the third year Hufflepuff tiredly. "I never thought that the Gryffindors will do something as...as despicable as this!"

"You're better off just changing Houses at the end of the year, Neville," muttered Daphne Greengrass, holding two pieces of a torn page together so that Theodore can fix it back together with some tape.

"Yeah," muttered Neville, looking extremely miserable. "Maybe I will."

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Halloween evening dawned bright and clear, and majority of the Houses were down in the Great Hall on the dot, enjoying the Halloween feast that had been prepared for them.

And as usual, Hilda and her friends were seated at the Ravenclaw table, though the girl itself in mention is looking particularly pissed off, and storm clouds were almost hovering above her head.

Padma blinked at her friend as she looked over a book. Strangely enough, Hermione wasn't with Hilda, and the blue-red eyed girl was looking particularly pissed off, and was emanating such a dangerous aura that anyone with even half a brain was wise enough to leave her alone.

The raven haired girl was currently mauling her steak with her knife and fork, pretending that it's Ron Weasley's face that she's stabbing at.

"What has that poor steak ever done to you, Hilda?" said Jasper sarcastically. "Leave it alone!"

"And what has gotten you so mad?" asked Padma, blinking curiously.

Hilda turned towards Padma with furious looking eyes, and Padma gulped inwardly. If looks could kill, she'll be dead a hundred times over. "It's that blasted Ronald Weasley!" Hilda nearly took Padma's eye out with her fork before turning back to mauling her steak which is starting to look like mashed steak.

Draco blinked in confusion in his seat across Hilda, his mashed potatoes halfway to his mouth. "What did that Weasel do this time?" he asked tiredly.

Hilda tends to have very good self-control, and no one ever saw her truly get mad before. He is ready to bet everything that he have that whatever Hilda is so angry over is bound to be something large.

Neville sighed. "Terry Boot was in the hospital wing today because of an accident in Herbology yesterday," he explained. "And so, Ron was without a partner in Potions earlier in the afternoon. Hermione found out that he was struggling with some parts of today's Potions lesson, and decided to help him out. But when she tried to help, he yelled at her and called her some pretty dreadful names."

"Neville, what did he call her?" asked Cedric, his face darkening considerably.

Neville muttered something beneath his breath that no one could hear.

"Pardon?"

Hilda slammed her fork so hard onto the table that a crack actually developed on it, and Draco winced. Technically, Hilda is part-vampire, and she had the strength of one as well. Not as strong as a full-blooded vampire, but still stronger than the average human.

But Hilda rarely shows traits that are more than human unless she's really pissed, and Draco knew her well enough to know that she's really angry. He won't be surprised to see sparks flying from Hilda's eyes.

"He called her an insufferable know-it-all little Mudblood!" Hilda growled out, speaking so quickly that her friends could barely catch what she had just said. "He also said that she has no business being here, and being friends with me is no difference from being a Dark supporter herself."

Crack!

Draco winced as he saw the fork broke beneath Hilda's hand, and it is pretty surprising, considering the fact that the fork is entirely made out of metal.

The faces of Jasper and Cedric darkened, and Padma looks as if she would like nothing more than to kill the redheaded Weasley.

"Where is Hermione now?" asked Draco, looking around.

"She ran into the girls' restroom on the second floor," said Hilda with a growl, still angry. "I've tried all afternoon to get her to come out, but she wouldn't listen to a single word that I've said!"

Padma got up from the table. "Come on, Hilda," she said briskly. "Let's go and get Hermione. I'll come with you this time."

Hilda nodded. She started to get up when the doors of the Great Hall swung opened just then, and Professor Quirell came running into the Great Hall, screaming at the top of his lungs. "T-Troll! T-Troll in the d-d-dungeons!" He stopped just before the teachers' table, and the entire Great Hall went eerily silent, all staring at him. "Thought that you ought to know."

And he fell backwards in a deep faint.

Hilda furrowed her brows together as the entire student population of Hogwarts started screaming their heads off and scrambling for the doors. 'Did he just faint backwards?' she thought, perplexed.

It took several firecrackers popping at the end of Dumbledore's wand before the entire Great Hall quietened down. "Prefects," said the Headmaster. "Kindly lead all students back to your House dormitories whilst all teachers will follow me to the dungeons."

"Come on," said Cedric, tugging Hilda by the arm.

The raven haired girl was about to follow the older boy when an awful thought struck her, and she grabbed hold of Cedric's arm, and all her friends stared at her. Hilda's face was awfully pale. "What about Hermione?" she asked urgently. "She doesn't know about the troll!"

Draco's face drained of all colour as he heard that. "Oh Merlin..." he muttered, palming his face.

Jasper nearly groaned to himself. "We'll probably all get detention for this, but we definitely can't leave a first year by herself when there is a troll roaming about in the school!" he said. "We have to find her! And let's hope that luck is on Hermione's side so that she does not end up running into the troll!"

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Luck is anywhere but with Hermione right at this instant, it seems like.

The moment that the group of them have arrived on the second floor, they saw a massive burly shape duck into a nearby room that turned out to be the girls' restroom. Not long after that, screams of terror reached their ears, and everyone turned pale.

Hilda and Draco were the first ones in before the others rushed in after them. The troll was massive and large like all trolls were supposed to be. It also had a stupid look on its face with a particularly dangerous-looking club in one hand that almost seemed like it could do a lot of damage if it should connect.

The troll in mention had Hermione backed into a corner where the sinks were located, and the bushy haired girl looked almost ready to faint, staring at the troll in absolute terror.

Cedric and Jasper were the first ones to act by casting Reducto simultaneously at the troll. But because of the troll's thick hide, the spells bounced harmlessly off it. But still, the two Hufflepuff third years kept up with their spells as it seemed to be the only way to draw the troll's attention away from the frightened Hermione.

Padma took that chance to get to Hermione and to get her away, but it seemed that action of movement had caught the troll's attention as it immediately turned around, focusing on the frightened Padma and Hermione immediately.

Hermione screamed as the troll's club came down a foot away from where she and Padma were standing, instantly shattering the sink that is just next to them.

"Get away from there, you two!" Draco shouted to the two girls, pulling his wand out and casting spells at the troll alongside Cedric and Jasper in a bid to distract the troll as well, but to no avail.

Padma and Hermione immediately scrambled away from another swing that had the instant effect to shatter the doors of a nearby cubicle, causing the two girls to scream in terror.

The troll grunted stupidly, wondering why the little things before him hadn't been squished yet.

Hilda gritted her teeth. She prayed to Hekate (1) that what she is going to do here would not get to the ears of the teachers, particularly Dumbledore. Ethan had warned her time and again to not use any vampire magic if possible, but it seemed like that would not be possible now.

"Jasper! Cedric! Draco! Hold your fire!" Hilda turned towards the three bewildered boys before turning back towards the troll. "Listen. Whatever that is going to happen here will not get out!"

"Huh?" Cedric and Jasper echoed, but Draco understood what Hilda meant.

He had only seen Hilda go into 'vampire form' once when she was chasing down a rouge vampire about two years ago with Ethan. He had only seen it once, but once is once too many. And Draco prayed hard to every single deity in existence that he will never get to see it again. If he has to put it into words, Hilda is...darker, much angrier, and more...aggressive in that form.

Ethan had explained it to him once; he had said that Hilda's vampire form is like her dark side. However, Hilda has extremely good self control and rarely lose control of her emotions, and thus, accidentally activating her 'vampire form'.

"You guys had better step back," said Draco, taking one step backwards. "Trust me, you don't want to be near when Hilda does this."

Jasper and Cedric glanced at each other, but obeyed as there is something in Draco's voice that told them that they wouldn't like testing his theory. Everyone was now watching Hilda.

Her eyes were cold, and is it Cedric's imagination, or is Hilda's eyes flashing red every now and then?

And when Cedric blinked, Hilda was gone from where she was standing where he had last seen her, and was on the right side of the troll. She raised her right hand before her face, and dark flames formed within her palm which she tossed at the troll's foot.

The troll gave a howl of pain and began lumbering around, swinging his club at where he thought Hilda was, but the girl was unexpectedly fast. One doesn't spend nearly all their life being trained by a vampire as well as hunting rouge vampires without picking up a few tricks. And if it is in speed, Hilda wouldn't lose to anyone save for perhaps another vampire.

"Hey ugly!"

The troll turned with a stupid look on his face, and all those watching watched as a black blur appeared in mid-air who kicked the club out of the troll's hand, with said club crashing against the wall not too far away from where Hermione and Padma were, causing them both to scream in fright, causing several cracks to appear on the wall as well.

But Hilda wasn't done yet as she turned 180 degrees in mid-air before using her other foot to kick the troll in the face. There was a sickening crunch as everyone heard the sound of bones breaking – though whether it is the troll's nose that is broken or Hilda's foot, no one had any idea.

Hilda then landed back onto the ground, cradling her left foot with one hand as she watched the troll, along with everyone else. Almost like in slow motion, the troll gave out a low groan before falling forwards and landing with a sickening crunch.

Silence fell among the group of students.

Draco was the first one to move or even speak as everyone else was too busy alternating between watching the troll and Hilda. But Draco had seen Hilda go after rouge vampires once, and he had seen her fight. Because she was brought up by Ethan, Hilda will be a prime target for the enemies of the Eastern vampire clan, and Ethan had deemed it fit to train her in combat so that she could protect herself even if she couldn't use magic.

That is actually how all vampires taught their young.

"Are you alright?" asked Draco, bending down to Hilda's eye level, one hand on her shoulder as he watched Hilda cover the ankle of her left foot with one hand.

"I think that my foot's broken," said Hilda with a wince as she tried to move her left foot, and pain shot through her leg immediately. "That is the last time that I'm actually going to kick a troll in the face."

Draco sighed. "And I hope that that is the last time that we'll ever get to face a troll again," he said.

The door of the bathroom swung opened just then, and everyone present turned only to see the enraged faces of their Heads of Houses.

"Good Heavens..." muttered Professor McGonagall, feeling quite faint as she saw the oversized troll lying unconscious on the ground, along with the current state of the bathroom which Hilda had never really noticed before. It looks as if a hurricane had just gone through the bathroom. "Explain yourselves, all of you!"

"It wasn't their fault, Professor McGonagall," said Cedric before anyone else could say anything, stepping forward. "Ronald Weasley had said some really awful things to Hermione which had caused her to run in here. Hilda then remembered that Hermione didn't know about the troll, and had come to warn her. The rest of us came along as we couldn't just leave Hilda and Hermione roaming about the school alone with a troll on the loose."

"Quite right, Mr Diggory," said Professor Sprout briskly. "You and Mr Summers did Hufflepuff proud by not abandoning your friends. Ten points will be awarded to each of you."

"Hilda, what's the matter with your foot?" asked Severus, speaking for the first time ever since the teachers have made their grand entrance.

Hilda's eyes were sharp enough to notice that the Potions master seemed to be walking with a limp, and there was even the faint stale smell of blood in the air that seemed to come from Severus himself.

"She hurt her foot earlier when she was distracting the troll from attacking us," said Hermione with a squeak, showing how terrified she had been, and still is.

"I think it's broken, Professor," said Draco, glancing over the injured limb, and looking at the teachers.

"Well, if that is all, you should help Ms Evans to the hospital wing," said McGonagall briskly.

Draco nodded before he helped Hilda up, with the girl hobbling on her uninjured limb until Cedric decided to carry her piggy-back to the hospital wing, much to her embarrassment, and Draco, Jasper, Hermione and Padma's amusement. But despite Hilda's protests that she can walk just fine, despite a broken ankle, the honey-blond haired teen wouldn't listen to any protests on her part, and carried her to the hospital wing to have Madam Pomfrey, the school nurse to take a look at Hilda's injury.

And if truth be told, Jasper thought that Cedric seemed rather disappointed when they've reached the hospital wing at last, and he has to let Hilda down from his back.

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Starlight's Hall  
Knockturn Alley

Ethan sighed as he passed a cocktail drink to one Remus Lupin who is sitting at the bar counter. It was an hour till closing time, and there were hardly any customers around save for the man himself. And because it is currently the school term, Severus couldn't come down quite so often anymore, and Lucius is currently busy trying to arrange a trial date for one Sirius Black on Ethan's behalf.



And from what Ethan had heard, Dumbledore wasn't too happy when he had heard that, and seemed to be trying to persuade the Minister that a trial isn't necessary for Sirius Black. That is, until Amelia Bones had put her foot down, and had declared that since Sirius Black wasn't given a trial before he was chucked to Azkaban because of the confusion back then during the war, they should give him one now since someone thinks that he might be innocent. And if he is indeed guilty, well, they can just chuck him straight back to Azkaban.

And as such, Lucius is trying to schedule a trial date for Sirius, and even so, the earliest that one could be held is during the Christmas holidays. And the fact that a trial is going to be held for Sirius Black is kept extremely secret, and only a selective few among the Ministry knew of it.

"Why so in the dumps?" asked Ethan briskly as he watched Remus stared into the contents of his drink. "You're even gloomier than usual. You're even affecting the mood of my house elves."

Remus was silent, not reacting to that rather feeble joke. "I lost my job again," he said.

Ethan sighed. "Again?" he said tiredly. "This is your fifth one this month alone, isn't it?"

Remus nodded. "My employers aren't stupid," he said. "They can easily figure out what I am especially since I always have to take day-offs during the time of the full moon. And getting a job in the Muggle world is nearly out of the question as I do not have Muggle education qualifications to even get the simplest job." He sighed. "If this goes on, and I can't pay my rent, I'm going to get evicted from my house soon."

Hilda may not like Remus because of what he represented of her past, but she doesn't exactly dislike the man himself, and Ethan seemed to like him as well. As long as Remus doesn't say anything relating to the Potters, Hilda has nothing against him. And when Hilda had found out during one of Remus' stays in Starlight's Hall that he couldn't afford the simplest things like buying new robes or even food, she had told him to come here whenever he couldn't afford food or the Wolfsbane Potion, and in return, he can help out around the bar.

Ethan sighed. "Housing is expensive these days," he said, and Remus nodded. "And not to mention that nearly everything speaks about money. It's difficult not holding a job."

Remus sighed. "Who would even want to hire a werewolf?" he asked miserably. "I don't blame my past employers for reacting how they did. I would probably react the same way if I hadn't been a werewolf myself. No one would want their families and friends to be near a potentially dangerous threat."

"But you are no threat," said Ethan patiently. "Not until the full moon at least. And even then, you still kept your mind, didn't you?" He sighed. "If only people understood that, then the werewolves might still have a chance in being accepted in society."

"And that decree released by that Ministry woman is making it even impossible for me to find a job," said Remus with a growl. "What is that toad faced woman's name again? Doris? Doreen?"

"Dolores Umbridge." Ethan corrected. "Hilda told me about her. Most of the Howlers that we received from the Ministry are from that woman or those working in Fudge's department. Just ignore her. Amelia Bones and Amos Diggory are working to reverse that decree."

Remus sighed. "But still, decree or no decree, it is nearly impossible for me to find a job," he admitted. "I'll take any job as long as it is something that I can do honestly, never mind the pay."

Ethan frowned slightly, studying Remus Lupin's dejected form. Well, Hilda did complain on more than one occasion that it's high time that they hire another person to help out around the bar as the house elves can't do everything around here. Even with Hilda around, they're short-handed enough as it is, especially since someone has to make the meals and drinks, keep an eye on the customers, make sure that the inn-stayers are not in trouble, etc.

Too much for one person to handle all at once.

Ethan is usually the one handling the food and drinks, but Hilda usually does the rest. And now with Hilda at school, he is running a

one man show all by himself. Even for a vampire, this is enough to wear him out.

"Remus." Said man looked up at the sound of his own name. "If you're interested, I've got a job offer for you." Remus brightened up. "Mind you, the pay isn't exactly high, but it should be enough to pay for your daily expenses as well for any other purchases that you wished to make monthly." Remus knew that Ethan is talking about the Wolfsbane Potion as it is expensive. "But the work involved will probably require you to be on your feet from morning to night."

"But will the employer mind about me being a werewolf?" asked Remus with concern. This is what he is worried about.

"No, he won't mind," said Ethan with a grin. "He isn't exactly human himself."

"What job is that? And who is he?" asked Remus in interest.

"I'm the one that wants to hire you," said Ethan, much to Remus' surprise. "I need another helper around here since Hilda's away at school, and I doubt that she will mind if we hire you. We've been looking for a helper for some time now. It's just that no one wants to work for us here since you knew our reputation." Ethan smiled. "Will you be willing to try? I'll even offer housing here since it'll be easier for you time-wise, and it'll lessen my workload too."

Remus thought about it for a moment before his face broke into a smile and he nodded.

"I'll accept your offer, Ethan."

A/N: I'm sorry if this chapter isn't up to my usual work standard. I have writer's block for this story for awhile. Anyway, I'm doing some brainstorming for my HP/Twilight crossover which should hopefully be up either this week or next week. I'll appreciate it if you can drop off a review for it then.

Anyway, I hope that you like this chapter and please read and review!

(1) Hekate is the Goddess of Witchcraft in Greek mythology, and I thought it fitting to have her as the goddess that the vampires believed in and worshipped.

## Chapter Seven: The Trial

Starlight's Hall  
Knockturn Alley

"Say WHAT?"

Ethan's loud and angry yell echoed throughout Starlight's Hall, and maybe it is a good thing in itself that they aren't opened yet.

Hilda would be returning home from Hogwarts that day, and Ethan is longing for a chance to see her. It had been months since he had last seen her, and even though they have often exchanged letters, it just isn't the same.

It was also arranged with the Malfoy and Diggory families that Christmas would be spent at Starlight's Hall as the bar would be closed for that one day anyway. Hermione and her parents would be coming over as well, and so would Neville and Padma.

Remus had been working at Starlight's Hall for about a month now by this point in time, and he seemed to be rather enjoying his work, something which Ethan is pleased to see. No longer would the werewolf need to fear the reactions of his employer once they've found out about his 'little furry problem', and he actually has a place that he could even transform in peace without fear of harming anyone. And it turns out that Remus is actually quite a good cook as well, as he often gave Ethan ideas for new items for the menu, and is quite a help to him.

Right now, however, Remus isn't down, as the bar isn't opened yet, and that day is also the trial day for one Sirius Black. Ethan could understand the nerves of the werewolf, and it is also decided that they would head straight to the Ministry hearing after fetching Hilda at King's Cross station.

Lucius Malfoy would also be attending that hearing as he has been the one to suggest it in the first place. And much to Severus' displeasure, both Ethan and Lucius combined have somehow managed to convince him to come with them.

Currently, a certain female vampire was seated at the bar counter of Starlight's Hall, massaging her sensitive ears that were currently ringing due to Ethan's loud shout.

"Gee, why don't you shout a little louder, Ethan?" Jessica Falsoss muttered sarcastically, massaging her ringing ears.

Ethan blushed a little, though it's kind of difficult to tell with a vampire. "Sorry," he muttered. "And what's this about a three-headed dog?"

Jessica sighed, leaning forwards slightly, resting her chin on an upturned palm as she answered Ethan's question, a glass of Bloody Mary set in front of her. "A Cerberus," she answered. "There's one in the school. From what I know, Dumbledore is the one to actually put it there. And I'm starting to wonder if he hasn't suddenly gone senile. He actually put a Cerberus, one of the world's most dangerous magical creatures in a school that is full of children?"

Ethan frowned to himself. "Sounds like this Cerberus is guarding something or the other," he commented, and Jessica nodded.

"I think so too," said Jessica. "But I'm not too certain about this, as Hogwarts wouldn't let me into the room that this Cerberus is guarding. Good vampire or not, I'm still an intruder in the school, as far as Hogwarts is concerned, and furthermore, Hogwarts don't really fully trust me yet." She then sighed. "But still, Cerberuses are a pretty rare species. That 'Fluffy' must belong to someone."

Ethan nearly choked on empty air. "Fluffy?" he repeated, eyes wide at that ridiculous name. "Who in this world is idiotic enough to name a Cerberus 'Fluffy' of all things?"

All the way in the school grounds of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, a certain gamekeeper sneezed.

Jessica tried hard to stifle her laughter.

"Beats me," she said with a shrug. "Anyway, I'll try to find out more about it for you. It's about time for you to head to King's Cross station, isn't it? Send Hilda my love."

"Okay. And send Lord Alucard my regards as well." Ethan smiled slightly before Jessica smiled and disappeared in a wisp of black smoke.

Remus walked down the stairs just then, dressed in rather decent looking robes. With the man holding a regular job now, he could afford little things like new robes and other stuff that he couldn't before. Ethan then smiled at Remus. "Ready to go?"

Remus nodded, and Ethan smiled.

"Lyra, can you take care of the bar for a few hours until we return?" Ethan asked, kneeling down to the eye level of the head house elf, and said house elf nodded her head enthusiastically. "We'll be back as soon as we can. And I'll appreciate it if you can prepare a hot piping meal for our guest." Ethan winked, and Lyra beamed, nodding, with her large ears flapping as she did so.

"Will do, Master Ethan!"

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Platform 9 $\frac{3}{4}$   
King's Cross Station

"ETHAN!"

Ethan nearly had all the wind in his lungs knocked out of him as a black blur lunged herself at him, and he would have fallen on his behind if he wasn't a vampire. Ethan chuckled as he hugged Hilda loosely.

"Hi Hilda," he said with a charming smile, causing several young ladies nearby to swoon. "Welcome home."

The Malfoy and Diggory families, along with Hermione and her parents all looked very much amused. And so did Neville's grandmother, though the strict old lady usually never shows her emotions outwardly.

"Hi Ethan, it's good to see you again." Draco grinned, bouncing up to the vampire, with both his parents following him.

"And you too," said Ethan, kneeling down to Draco's eye level. "Well, I'll look forward to welcoming you on Christmas, though I have a feeling that you'll be dropping by sooner. Going to treat Starlight's Hall as your 'second home', do you?"

Draco grinned. "You know me!" he said, and Ethan chuckled.

The whole group of them ignored the curious bystanders, particularly a family of redheads who all paled upon seeing Ethan, immediately recognising him as what he is. Hilda and Draco ignored said redheaded family prominently by turning their backs on that family, and greeted Remus Lupin who is standing in a corner silently.

"Well, we really should make a move to the Ministry," said Lucius Malfoy, glancing at Ethan who nodded. "The hearing will begin in two hours."

Ethan had sent Hilda an extremely long letter explaining about one Sirius Black and his current situation about two days before she is due to return home from Hogwarts. Hilda had promptly written back, stating that if Sirius is indeed innocent, then he shouldn't be taking the rap for someone else.

"I'll get one of the house elves to take Hilda's stuff back to the bar," said Ethan. And right on cue, there was a light crack before a house elf appeared by Ethan before bowing. And with another light crack, the house elf disappeared with Hilda's stuff. "Amos, would you be coming with us?" Ethan turned towards Amos.

Amos nodded. "Yeah. I am one of the jury involved in this hearing," he said. "We should get going."

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Wizengamot Court  
Ministry of Magic

Hilda who was seated in between Ethan and Draco glanced nervously at her guardian who smiled reassuringly. Cedric who was seated next to Draco smiled at her. Both Lucius and Amos were seated with the rest of the Wizengamot, with one Amelia Bones heading the defence for Sirius Black.



Ethan was relieved for that. He knew Amelia Bones as being very fair and very forgiving. She was the one who had assisted him in getting his license to open Starlight's Hall when that Dolores Umbridge woman had rejected his applicant without even looking at it, just because Ethan is a vampire.

Amelia Bones had also made it so that no one could take Hilda away from Ethan just because of his vampire nature, not that anyone is foolish enough to try. As technically, Hilda is part-vampire, and if anyone had tried that, they will bring the wrath of the entire Nightwing vampire clan down upon their heads.

But still, the entire Ministry has never been fond of Ethan, save for Amelia, Lucius, Amos and a few others, not that Ethan actually cared.

Among the Wizengamot was also one Albus Dumbledore, much to Ethan, Lucius, Amos and Hilda's annoyance. None of them have actually liked him because of his manipulation tendencies.

Remus was mostly neutral towards Dumbledore, though even the werewolf was starting to change his mind about his former headmaster when he'd found out from Ethan that Dumbledore had chucked Sirius into Azkaban without a trial, despite the aged old wizard knowing that Sirius has never been the Potters' Secret Keeper.

The doors swung opened just then before two Dementors swooped in, with one Sirius Black in chains in between them both. And next to Ethan, Hilda stiffened considerably, and Cedric and Draco both paled.

The effects that Dementors had on humans were actually lessened to a considerable extent because Hilda had vampire blood in her veins, but they still do affect her. Ethan glared at the Dementors with his red eyes flashing as he placed one arm around Hilda in order to calm her down.

The Dementors actually paused in their tracks for a brief moment as they caught Ethan's eye, and what seemed like fear could actually be seen in their demeanour, not that anyone but the vampires could tell.

Dementors were rather afraid of vampires for a reason that only the vampires themselves knew. And thus, the two Dementors hurried with strapping Sirius Black down in the chair with chains before swooping out of the room.

If anyone didn't know any better, they'll think that the Dementors looked like they would rather be anywhere but in this room.

Cornelius Fudge, the Minister of Magic stood up.

"The court is now in session for the retrial of one Sirius Black," said Fudge.

Some unknown Ministry official then stepped forward with a potion vial of Veritaserum in hand, also more commonly known as the Truth Potion. The Ministry official then tilted Sirius' head back and opened his mouth before tipping a few drops of Veritaserum into his mouth and making sure that Sirius swallowed it.

Hilda had learned from Severus during her Potion lessons with him prior to starting at Hogwarts, that Veritaserum is a strong potion, and too many drops of it administered to a human can kill them. That is why there are usually strong restrictions on Veritaserum Potions, and only a number of Potions masters can make them without any restrictions in wizarding Britain, among which included Severus Snape.

Amelia Bones then stood up, ready to set the ball rolling. "What is your name?" she questioned.

"Sirius Orion Black." Sirius answered monotonely.

Good. That means that the potion is now in effect.

"Are you the Potters' Secret Keeper?" Amelia questioned.

"No."

Mutterings broke out all over the hearing hall just then, and Remus looked as if Christmas had just come early. The werewolf looked almost happy, yet confused at the same time. Amelia didn't miss a beat as she asked her next question.

"Who is the Potters' Secret Keeper?"

"Peter Pettigrew."

Amelia narrowed her eyes, and the whisperings grew louder.

"Peter Pettigrew?" Amelia muttered. "Records stated that you killed him, did you not? Can you explain what had happened on the night of 31 October 1981?"

"Lily and James decided to switch Secret Keepers at the last moment on my suggestion. I had thought of it as the perfect bluff, the best way to keep them safe. Voldemort—" More than half of the court flinched at the sound of that accursed name. "—would be sure to come after me. He would never dream that Lily and James would use a weak talentless little thing like Pettigrew as their Secret Keeper. That was what we'd thought at that time."

"On that night when I'd heard that Lily and James were murdered, I ignored Dumbledore's orders to the rest of the Order of the Phoenix to arrest all the other Death Eaters. I knew that Pettigrew is the Secret Keeper, and the only thing on my mind then is to rip the traitor apart myself. I had him cornered in a street full of Muggles, and he yelled out for everyone to hear that I had betrayed Lily and James before blowing the street up with the wand that he had hidden behind his back. He then probably cut off his finger to fake his death, and transformed into a rat, before escaping down the sewers with all the other rats."

"Transformed into a rat?" Amelia asked sharply. "Is he an Animagus then? Ministry records had never stated that Peter Pettigrew is an Animagus."

"All of us – me, Peter and James, we became illegal Animagus during our fifth year at Hogwarts. This knowledge is only privy between the four of us – me, Peter, James and Remus."

Amelia nodded, satisfied with her questioning. She then turned towards the other member of the Wizengamot who would be leading the trial alongside Amelia, who also seemed stunned at what Sirius had said, and everyone knew that it is virtually impossible for anyone to lie whilst under the effects of Veritaserum.

"I think that that is enough," said Amelia, and the other wizard nodded slowly.

Amelia then pointed her wand at Sirius and muttered a string of words beneath her breath before Sirius stirred slowly and opened his eyes, looking a tad bit confused and incoherent at the same time.

The other wizard then stood up, turning around to face the entire Wizengamot. "The Wizengamot will now commence, and will have ten minutes to decide if Sirius Orion Black is to be declared innocent or guilty as charged."

Mutterings started to break out all over the court as Amelia Bones and the wizard walked towards where the rest of the Wizengamot were, and started to converse with them in low tones. Ethan noted that Dumbledore doesn't look pleased at all, and he can guess why too.

Hilda looked almost pale, and Remus is as bad, if not worse than her. The poor man was holding his head in his hands and repeating the words, "What have I done?" over and over beneath his breath.

When silence reigned upon the court, the attention of everyone else was turned towards Amelia and the wizard who have turned to face them. Amelia cleared her throat before reading from a piece of parchment in her hand.

"The Wizengamot have decided that Sirius Orion Black is to be declared innocent regarding the events on the night of 31 October 1981." Amelia announced in her clear voice, and Hilda heaved a sigh of relief, alongside Remus. "He will be awarded a hefty sum of 50,000 Galleons per year regarding his mistaken imprisonment in Azkaban prison for the past ten years, and is to be also fined a sum of 8,000 Galleons, due to Mr Black's case of being an unregistered Animagus."

Ethan whistled a low whistle to himself as he quickly calculated the money that Sirius would be getting. 50,000 Galleons each year that he is imprisoned in Azkaban equals to 500,000 Galleons, with 8,000 Galleons being deducted from that amount, with it equalling to the total amount of 492,000 Galleons.

Sirius could easily not work another day in his life with that much money on hand, though with him being the last male heir of the House of Black, he is already considered wealthy even without that money.

"Come on, Remus," said Ethan briskly, standing up as the court was adjourned. He then turned towards Hilda, Draco and Cedric. "Hilda, head back to the bar without me. Sirius looks like he needs some time to compose himself, and I think that it is best if you do not see him that way." Hilda nodded slowly. "Draco and Cedric, I appreciate you coming here to be with Hilda, but I think that Hilda would like some alone time with Sirius."

Both boys nodded dumbly before following their individual fathers out of the court, with Hilda following them out.

Sirius was still sitting in the chair that he was tried in, still in a daze when Ethan and Remus walked up to him, with Ethan producing a cloak from out of nowhere and draping it around Sirius's shoulders as Remus helped him up.

Sirius's face broke into a warm smile when he saw Remus.

"Remus..."

Remus was smiling as well as he hugged Sirius like a brother. "Welcome back, Padfoot," he said, his voice sounding like he was about to cry. "I'm so sorry! What kind of friend am I when I so readily believed that you've betrayed Lily and James?"

"You look well," Sirius smiled at his friend. "Do you hold a job now?"

Remus nodded. "This is my employer. And yes, he knew about my 'condition'," said Remus, pulling Ethan to stand beside him.

Sirius then studied Ethan slowly from head-to-foot, eyes resting longer on Ethan's crimson red eyes.

"You're a vampire? And also the one that had asked for my retrial?" Sirius asked, not seeming affected or even bothered by the fact that Ethan is a vampire. Ethan nodded. "Thank you. For everything that you've done, and for what you've done for Remus as well. You have no idea how much it actually means to him."

"I do not believe in imprisoning a man without a trial held," said Ethan curtly, and Sirius's eyes widened as he recognised Sirius's voice.

"You're the one from before..."

Ethan sighed and nodded. "I've promised you that I will tell you everything once you are a free man, Sirius Black," he said. "And I shall. But for now, let's just head back to my bar. You're welcome to stay there with us as Remus is. And I'm sure that he would like the company. Furthermore, I'll always welcome an extra pair of hands with the work involved there. I'll explain everything once we're back at the bar. Even the walls here have ears." He then smiled. "Hilda is waiting."

That had the instant effect to cause Sirius's eyes to light up immediately.

"Let's go!"

Remus chuckled before he followed his best friend, with Ethan following.

It was nothing had changed with their friendship at all.

It didn't take the trio too long for Sirius to claim his compensation from Amelia's secretary, and also to pay the fine for being an illegal Animagus. The secretary even greeted Sirius with a warm smile and a nod, welcoming Sirius back in indirect terms.

Remus made a note to go shopping with Sirius in Diagon Alley one day for a haircut and some new robes, along with getting Sirius a new wand, as the Ministry had snapped Sirius's old wand when he was arrested all those years ago. And not to mention the fact that Sirius still has to settle all his affairs at Gringotts, along with claiming his title as the Lord of House Black, and also to get the bank deeds for the Black family vaults, and the title deed for Grimmauld Place.

Sirius shielded his eyes from the warm sunlight as they stepped out of the Ministry building, not having seen any sunshine for the past decade or so, and his skin was unnaturally pale because of it. Sirius staggered in his step for several moments or so as his eyes focused

slowly in the warm sunlight, and Ethan and Remus looked at Sirius with concern.

They both knew that he needs some time to compose himself.

A small smile then broke out on Sirius's face as he saw a bird soaring in the sky, trilling merrily, a song falling from its throat. A lone tear dripped down from Sirius's eye.

"Free..." he whispered.

Warnings: Dumbledore bashing, Weasley bashing save for Bill, Charlie and the twins, siding with Voldemort-fic

Disclaimer: I do not own Harry Potter and any of the characters, but the OC characters belongs to me

## Chapter Eight: Christmas at Starlight's Hall

"...and then Peter added in a little more than required of the Mandrake's Roots for Potions, and the potion that he was working on exploded. Sev was then walking around with purple hair for days!"

Hilda fought hard to restrain a giggle at Sirius' tale of his fourth year Potions lesson, whilst four chairs away, Severus Snape was fighting the urge to murder his old rival on the spot.

It had been nearly a week ever since Sirius' return to the world, and the ex-convict was given quite a welcome by Hilda when he had first stepped in through the doors of Starlight's Hall, and even had a hot piping meal prepared by Lyra which almost seems to be fit for a king.

After having been stuck in a jail cell for almost a decade, Sirius was more than pleased to be able to have a nice hot bath to scrub off all the grime and dirt that had stayed on him for nearly a decade. In fact, he was so dirty that the water had actually comically turned gray as he had to wash himself for nearly five times before he was squeaky clean.

And naturally, Ethan had to fill Sirius in on everything that has happened so far, including the part about Hilda, and the man was far from pleased. Remus actually had to spend the entire evening during Sirius' welcome back party, trying to convince Sirius that killing Dumbledore is a very bad and stupid idea. He had just been released from Azkaban after all. Remus doesn't want to see his best friend being shoved back in there that soon.

And that makes the number of people who knew who Hilda really is five.

Remus has no idea how Ethan had done it either, but he had somehow managed to make both Sirius and Severus 'bury their old hatchet', as what Lucius Malfoy had called it. That is already a



miracle in itself, as the enmity between Sirius and Severus had been ongoing ever since their school days.

The relationship between Sirius and Severus now is kind of like an old rivalry, not hatred like how it used to be. Though Remus suspects that Hilda had a lot to do with it, as both men have a soft spot for her, though Ethan had probably contributed to it.

Remus and Hilda have also taken Sirius shopping for new robes, a new haircut, along with settling his bank affairs at Gringotts. The man himself had come back from that shopping trip a very happy man with his new stylish haircut, along with the ring that symbolises that he is the Head of House Black resting on the ring finger of his right hand – a custom for most pureblood families.

Remus and Sirius have also disappeared for a week to 'sort out' Grimmauld Place, especially with all the curses and hexes on it, and Ethan had actually called in one of his friends to help who is more than happy to do so. The two men and one vampire have never told Ethan and Hilda what had actually transpired there, but the end result is that Grimmauld Place now looked more like a house than something that had come out of the dungeons, and the place was suddenly missing their lone house elf along with the portrait of Sirius' mother...

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Christmas morning had been a very busy affair for Starlight's Hall.

As per tradition, there was a Christmas party held that evening at the bar, and the house elves have also cleared the tables and chairs away, making a dance floor in the middle of the bar. Ethan always did this every Christmas – holding a party and a dance on Christmas evening, so that those that have been ostracised by majority of the magical community could even enjoy themselves on Christmas Day. And Ethan don't see why they should suffer out in the bitter cold or even be lonely on a day of celebration.

And naturally, the Malfoy and Diggory families were invited as well to this party which both families have accepted. Amos Diggory wanted to get to know more magical creatures, seeing as how he worked with magical creatures in the Ministry. The Malfoy family had

already been doing this every Christmas ever since they have met Ethan and Hilda, and Narcissa had even commented once that it is much better than just having a small celebration like they tend to do.

Severus was also invited as well, as Ethan just wouldn't take no for an answer, and the vampire had some very...persuasive ways. And naturally, Sirius and Remus were invited as well. And so were Hermione and her parents, along with Jasper and Neville. Padma had actually been invited too, but her parents had to decline the invitation, as they were already invited to a Christmas party with the parents of one of Parvati's friends.

Padma had actually been very upset by the fact that her twin still isn't talking to her because of who her friends are. But at least her parents are very supportive of her choice of friends, and had even allowed her to spend the remainder of her Christmas holidays at Starlight's Hall because of the tense atmosphere with the twins.

Hilda wasn't pleased to hear about Padma's situation, and neither were any of her friends. The dark haired girl had actually popped over to Padma's house together with Sirius to pick up Padma a day before Christmas, and when Padma's parents have fire-called her by Floo later that evening, they have informed her of a series of well thought out pranks that have bombarded Parvati just outside her room that morning, and had continued all day. And no one had ever gotten enough evidence to prove that it is Hilda who had done it.

Draco and Cedric have both popped by rather early on Christmas morning to Starlight's Hall to help with the preparations which Hilda and Ethan were both rather grateful for. They were already short-handed as it is during non-festival days, even with Remus' help, but throw in a festival day, and it'll be ten times as worst.

And between Hilda, Ethan, Cedric, Draco, Remus and Sirius, along with the house elves, they managed to get the preparations all done, along with the decorations, by the time that the clock struck five.

Ethan had dimmed the lights of the bar – but not so dark until one could barely see where they were going. And to Sirius and Remus' astonishment, Ethan had actually managed to get a group of light elves to sing and play for them, as it is well-known among the magical community that the light elves were close to near extinction, and they would never show themselves if they could help it.

"It looked wonderful!" Hermione exclaimed at seven that evening when she had popped by with her parents, looking all around the bar.

Neville had come a little later than Hermione, apologising fervently, saying something about having to visit his parents in St. Mungo's, and his grandmother had declined the Christmas invitation that Ethan had extended to her, explaining that she doesn't like parties, and would prefer a silent and simple affair for Christmas.

It had also been decided that Hermione and her parents would stay the night, along with all their other guests, and the bushy haired girl would be sharing Hilda's room with Padma, whilst her parents would be given one of the guest rooms that they've used for the inn. Neville, Jasper and Cedric would also be sharing one room between them.

Even the goblins of Gringotts have joined in the fun, which is something that Hermione was most surprised to see. Unknown to the bushy haired girl however, the head goblin of Gringotts had actually struck a deal with Ethan a few months ago that if he agrees to give all goblins of Gringotts a forty percent discount off all drinks and food at the bar, he would spare two goblins to guard Starlight's Hall – acting as guards of some sort, though the correct term for it would probably be 'bouncers'.

Ethan had agreed to it immediately, and thus, Starlight's Hall does not have any problems with any of their customers since then, as the goblins were pretty efficient in sniffing out those so-called wizards and witches from the 'Light' side, and didn't waste any time in throwing them out. Especially since Ethan had made it quite clear that those on Dumbledore's side or on the 'Light' side who ostracises against those who are different are not welcomed in Starlight's Hall.

And the two surly looking goblins dressed in metal armour and helmets, being armed with dangerous looking spears looked quite intimidating. And those who are still sane sure have no wish to want to test being the goblins' test subject with that spear.

"I know. Wonderful, right?" Hilda laughed, as the youngsters were gathered in a corner chatting over some drinks and food whilst the adults were in another corner.

A number of their visitors were already dancing on the floor, and Cedric could have sworn that he saw a couple of vampires waltzing to the music, along with another couple of elves. Then again, it isn't really that surprising, especially since Ethan is a vampire, and from what he had heard from his father, both Ethan and Hilda have connections with the non-humans and part-humans from all over.

"Did you get my present, by the way, Hilda?" asked Hermione, turning towards Hilda who nodded, currently in the midst of swallowing some spaghetti.

"I've received it this morning," said Hilda after swallowing her food. "Along with all your other presents, of course." She added, glancing at her friends. "Thanks, by the way. Did you receive mine?"

"Of course."

"Naturally."

"My parents seemed like they are having a great time." Cedric commented, glancing over at his parents who were currently in the middle of a discussion with Ethan, whilst Sirius and Severus were currently in a debate over something. The honey-blonde haired teen then frowned. "Is it just me, or is Ethan looking a little...off colour?"

Hilda sighed. "Yeah, I did notice that too," she said. "It is kind of difficult to tell with a vampire, but Ethan had been looking a little peaky for awhile now, according to Lyra."

"I don't even know that vampires can get sick." Hermione commented, one eyebrow raised.

Hilda sighed. "They don't," she stated. "Not in the normal way at least." She sighed. "Well, it is Ethan that we're talking about. He can take care of himself."

"Why don't we dance?" Jasper suggested. "Those out there seemed like they're having fun."

"Yeah," said Cedric, watching as Jessica tugged Ethan out onto the dance floor, much to Remus, Lucius and Narcissa's amusement. "Hermione, why don't you dance with Jasper?"

"H-Huh?" The bushy haired girl almost squeaked, and before she even knew what is going on, she was tugged to the dance floor by Jasper.

"W-Well, excuse me for a moment," said Hilda nervously, getting up, and literally escaping to Remus' side before any of the boys can drag her to the dance floor.

Remus chuckled at Hilda's flushed face as she looked over her shoulder like something is about to eat her alive. "Not going to dance?" he asked.

Hilda sighed. "No thanks, Remus," she said. "Besides, no one ever asked me to."

"Well, those boys seemed like they would like to dance with you," said Remus sensibly with a glass of ale in his left hand, watching as Sirius twirled around with some girl on the dance floor. "I know that Draco wouldn't mind for instance."

Hilda almost groaned. "Don't go about putting ideas into his head, thank you, Remus," she said seriously.

Many people have made jokes over the years that both Hilda and Draco would end up together. Hilda knew that it would never happen though. For one, the Malfoy family is a powerful wizard family. And while Lucius Malfoy is unlike the other heads of the various pureblood families, and would not stick to their ridiculous beliefs, and hence would not interfere in his son's love life, he wouldn't be pleased to have his family suddenly becoming 'family' with a family of vampires, and one of the royal clans of vampire society furthermore! Besides, Hilda knew that Draco seemed to like Daphne Greengrass, one of the quieter Slytherin girls who had been one of their friends.

The music suddenly changed to that of a slow romantic piece of rhythmical classical music, and slowly, the dance floor became filled with people. Those that didn't have a dance partner were having a game of cards between themselves, or just watching the couples dancing to the music on the dance floor. The house elves were kept busy by filling the orders for drinks and food from the customers, yet the looks on their faces were satisfied and happy.

Hilda was watching Jasper and Hermione twirled about for the fifth time that night with a glass of Butterbeer in her hand, wondering to herself if Jasper liked Hermione or something. She knew that her best friend liked Jasper, even though she thought that she had hidden it pretty well, yet unfortunately, Hilda isn't your typical person.

Cedric slid over to Hilda just then, with a grin on his handsome face. "Enjoying the party?"

Hilda smiled at him. "Kind of," she admitted. "I've already been through this several times ever since Starlight's Hall was set up, yet this is the first time that my friends from school are here."

"I do believe that this is the best Christmas of all. An unforgettable one." Cedric admitted. "I know that Dad is enjoying himself, for one."

He jerked his chin towards Amos Diggory's direction, and Hilda turned only to see Amos and Remus having a kind of debate with Althena, one of the Rune Mistresses that the Midnight Society (1) had accepted into their fold – one of the few humans that were accepted as one of them. Remus looked extremely interested in whatever Althena was saying, whilst Amos looked on with interest, and Hilda guessed that their current discussion must be about runes, as that is the only topic that can capture Althena's interest. Other than that, Althena almost never speak to anyone.

Hilda laughed to herself, and her light laughter almost sounded like tinkling bells to Cedric's ears. "Remus looked like he is having fun," she commented.

Cedric sighed. "About damn time. I swear that he is too serious sometimes. It wouldn't kill him to enjoy himself every once in awhile," he muttered, and Hilda laughed.

Sirius had said that same thing to Remus a few hours ago when they were all helping to decorate the bar with the Christmas decorations.

Cedric then noticed the look in Hilda's red-blue eyes as she looked at the dancing couples on the dance floor, and he then smiled to himself. The honey-blonde haired teen placed his glass of Butterbeer on the bar counter behind him with a light 'clink', and he

then took Hilda's hand, and pulled her gently with him to the dance floor.

"Cedric?"

"Come on."

"H-Huh?"

Cedric ignored Hilda's protests as he pulled her along with him gently towards the middle of the dance floor. Jasper grinned at Cedric as he waltzed away with Hermione who was giggling to herself nervously.

"C-Cedric, this isn't a good idea."

"Don't worry about it."

Cedric looked into Hilda's eyes before taking hold of her right hand gently before placing it on his shoulder, and she blushed slightly, taking note of their closeness, and Cedric's right hand grasped her left, his other hand resting on the small of her back. Both of them began moving in time with the music, only seeing each other, a peaceful smile on both their faces, lost in their own world.

'It's really an unforgettable Christmas, Cedric. Thank you for this dance.'

XXXXXX

A day after Christmas Day can find Padma Patil waking up when it is nearly noon, not that anyone can blame her, especially since they have all been up pretty late on Christmas Day. And Padma isn't what you would call a morning person either.

Padma rubbed her eyes sleepily as she noticed Hilda's empty bed with the bedclothes made, and the makeshift bed that Hilda had made up for Hermione beside her own makeshift bed, with the blankets rumpled, and guessed that Hermione must already have left.

Padma sat up in bed before opening the door and stepped out of the doorway, still in her nightclothes, only to see Hilda with a mop in her

hands, cleaning the hallway, whilst a number of enchanted mops and brooms were magically cleaning the rest of the hallway behind her, along with a number of washcloths cleaning the walls and the paintings hung on it.

"Hilda?" Padma voiced out.

Hilda raised an eyebrow when she both heard and saw Padma, and leaned onto the mop that she is using. "So you're finally up," she stated. "You must be really tired to sleep this long though. It's already noon."

"Already?" Padma squeaked. "How long have you been up?"

Hilda raised an eyebrow before resuming her cleaning. "At the crack of dawn," she answered. "And don't look so surprised. I've been doing this for years now, especially since I do live in a bar, you know?"

"Hehe." Padma giggled nervously, scratching her cheek idly with one finger. "I'll go and wash up then."

"Bathroom's that way," said Hilda tiredly, jerking one thumb over her shoulder. "And Draco might be coming over a little later. He always pops by around this hour. He's no morning bird either."

XXXXXX

"Where is Ethan?" Hilda muttered to herself irritably as she headed down the staircase to the ground level of the bar after having searched nearly every single inch of the bar for her guardian.

During the daytime, the bar functions like a cafe of some sort, and business is always a tad bit slow then. Thus, Hilda wasn't surprised to see that there wasn't anyone around, especially since it had only been a day after Christmas.

Hilda frowned as she whipped her head left and right before turning towards Lyra who was passing by her with a mountain of washcloths in her arms, almost concealing the house elf itself from view. "Lyra, have you see Ethan?"



The head house elf peeked her head from around the mountain of washcloths. "No, Lyra hasn't seen Master Ethan, Miss Hilda," she squeaked. "Master Ethan hasn't appeared all day."

Hilda frowned, but that frown immediately disappeared when both her and the house elf heard a loud thump from somewhere inside the back room which has the potion making room, with the kitchen not too far away from the back room. The storage cabinet where they've stored all their potions and first aid kit were stored in the back room as well.

"What was that?" Hilda wondered before she headed towards the back room, with Lyra passing her bundle of washcloths to a passing house elf, and taking off after Hilda as well. "Ethan? Are you here?" She pushed the cloth concealing the entrance of the back room aside before entering. "Ethan?"

Lyra appeared at Hilda's side at the exact same moment when Hilda's eyes widened, having seen what she did.

Ethan was hunched over the sink, looking paler than normal before he collapsed to the ground.

"ETHAN!"

Hilda was over by Ethan's side before one could even blink, turning the vampire over on his back, and slapping his face lightly, shaking him all the while. "Ethan! Ethan!"

"Master Ethan!" Lyra cried, the house elf looking extremely distraught and extremely frantic. "Master Ethan!"

"Lyra! Head for the castle and get the High Prince!" Hilda who is never one to raise her voice almost shouted at the distraught Lyra. "Hurry!"

Lyra nodded, her large ears flapping. "Yes Miss Hilda."

With a loud crack, Lyra Apparated on the spot.

Between Padma and Hilda both, they both managed to get Ethan into his bed in his bedroom whilst one of the other house elves put up the 'Closed' sign on the front door of the bar. And it wasn't long

after that before High Prince Eric appeared in Ethan's room with a wisp of black smoke with Lyra perched on his shoulder – appearing with the vampires' form of teleportation, wearing a serious look on his face.

"High Prince!" Hilda turned towards Eric who immediately hurried over to his brother's bedside, a worried look appearing on the handsome face of the vampire prince.

"Hilda, what happened?" he asked abruptly, turning towards Hilda.

"I have completely no idea!" said Hilda as Eric began checking on his brother. "He was just fine yesterday! And then he just collapsed awhile back! What is wrong with him?"

"Hilda, calm down!" said Eric calmly. Apart from Ethan and his father, he is about the only person (or vampire) who can calm Hilda down. The girl had never lost control of her emotions before, thanks to her upbringing, and when she does lose control, it is a sight to see. "Let me take a look at him."

Eric placed a hand on his brother's forehead, and a faint red glow surrounded his hand before the High Prince frowned. "Hilda. When is the last time that he had fed?"

Even for vampires, they do need to feed, even though they do not have to do it every single day. There are a few vampires who do not feed on humans, but on animals instead, though there are some who feed on both – like Jessica and her clan, the Falsoss clan. And even the Nightwing clan.

"Huh? I'm not too certain. Maybe a week? Two weeks? Maybe even longer," said Hilda. Now that she come to think of it, when is the last time that Ethan had fed? "I've just returned for the Christmas holidays three days ago, and he doesn't look too well even then."

"I knew it." Eric muttered irritably, turning back to his younger brother. "This idiot... Even for vampires like us who have royal blood flowing through our veins, we need to feed at least once a month. He's suffering from bloodlust. That is a situation that happens to a vampire who hasn't satisfied their instincts for the need for blood. His blood and magic is fighting for supremacy in cases like that.

He's hungry. If he doesn't feed soon, he's going to fade away. Or worst, he'll become nothing more than a mindless beast."

Hilda paled. She knew what happens to vampires who didn't satisfy their thirst for blood. She had been on some of those missions with Ethan to hunt down the rogue vampires who have turned into mindless monsters. She may not like what she has to do, but she understood that it's necessary to stop them from attacking muggle villages and towns and exposing their kind.

Even for vampires, they have their own rules to abide by. Those rules aren't a lot, but the most prominent one is the one rule that states that they have to keep the existence of their kind a secret from Muggles. For generations, the vampires and the rest of the Midnight Society had been at loggerheads with the Ministry and those so-called wizards and witches from the 'Light' side. Those few wizards and witches are the reason why the light elves have been close to near extinction after all.

"...High Prince."

Eric sighed, inviting curious looks from Padma who is in the room as well, though she is keeping well on Hilda's other side, finding it a tad bit intimidating to be in the same room with the vampire High Prince.

"Eric." Eric interjected.

He is never one for formality, though he doesn't mind it coming so much from his fellow vampires, he did mind when it comes to his own immediate family. He thinks of Hilda as his own sister after all, and found it odd that while she doesn't mind addressing his younger brother as 'Ethan', she insisted on sticking to formality with him and his father. It made Eric uncomfortable, as it made him feel like Hilda didn't feel like she is part of the Nightwing clan, their family.

Hilda sighed. "Fine. Eric," she muttered, and a small smile tilted at the ends of Eric's lips. "How much blood does he need?"

Padma blinked owlishly at this strange question.

Having grown up with vampires, Hilda knew and understood their ways better than anyone else out there, even better than some of those witches and wizards who have been accepted into their fold.

Technically, Hilda is part-vampire herself, though she doesn't require blood in order to survive.

"About 1.5 litres," said Eric slowly, not taking his eyes off of Hilda. What is that girl thinking now? Her thinking had always been unpredictable. And Ethan still remains the only vampire who knew and understood what she is thinking. Though Jessica probably could as well, seeing as how she is the only older sister figure in Hilda's life. "Why?"

Hilda turned back towards Ethan and didn't say anything for several moments, though Eric could see the muscles in Hilda's neck tightening. The red-blue eyed girl then turned back towards Eric, her left hand clenched into a fist. "He can take my blood."

"HUH?" Eric blinked owlishly, and Padma nearly tumbled off the cushion that she is sitting on with shock. "You'll collapse if you have that much taken from you, Hilda! Even if you are part-vampire, it is still too much for you! And Ethan won't be able to stop until he had sucked you dry! Even you knew that, Hilda!"

"Then you stop him," said Hilda calmly. "Lyra. Get me some Blood Replenishing Potions from the cabinet."

"Yes Miss Hilda," said the house elf before Disapparating on the spot.

Eric sighed. "Are you sure about this?" he asked seriously. "Ethan will kill me if something happens to you."

"Yes. Ethan saved me back when I was a mere child. It's high time that I returned the favour."

Padma's ears pricked up when she heard Hilda said that. Hilda had never spoken about her past before, and Padma mentally filed away that piece of information for future reference.

Eric nearly sighed. "Fine," he muttered before Lyra Apparated into the room again with a loud crack, a number of potion vials filled with the Blood Replenishing Potion in her arms. "You there. What's your name?"

Padma blinked. "P-Padma Patil."

Eric sighed. "Leave this room," he commandeered. "You shouldn't watch this. Lyra."

"Yes, Master Eric?" Lyra squeaked, her golf-like eyes big and scared, her ears flapping nervously.

"Take her to Sirius and Remus," said Eric with a sigh.

"But..." Padma started, looking from one to the other.

"Padma, I'll owl you at Grimmauld Place once this is over, or I'll even fire-call you," said Hilda who is currently removing her jacket. She always wore Muggle clothing during her holidays as she found it more comfy – the same way that most vampires wore aristocrat clothes, having most Muggles mistaken them as some nobles. "Eric is right. You shouldn't watch this. Don't worry, I know what I'm doing. Sirius and Remus are doing some cleaning over at Grimmauld Place. Go to them, and explain to them what is going on. Lyra will take you there. There are vampire wards on that place which makes Apparitation and wizard magic near impossible, unless your blood had been warded into the place."

Padma nodded before standing up, and taking Lyra's hand as the house elf prepared to Disapparate herself, along with Padma. "Hilda, should I let Hermione and Draco know? Along with the rest?"

Hilda pondered on that question. "Well, I have to let them know sooner or later. So I guess you had better let them know. Tell them that I'll fire-call them in a few days."

Padma nodded before she disappeared with a loud crack, along with Lyra.

"Alright," said Eric with a sigh, glancing at Hilda. "I'll stop Ethan if it gets too much for you."

Hilda nodded as she sat on the edge of the bed, with Eric placing Ethan in an upright sitting position, the elder vampire slapping his brother's face lightly to wake him up. "Ethan. Ethan? Can you hear me? You have to feed now. You can't draw out your bloodlust state for much longer. I'm impressed that you had even managed to last this long. Ethan."

Ethan's eyelids twitched before it fluttered opened, and Hilda could see that his half-lidded eyes were glazed over – almost like he didn't even know what is going on, and is almost incoherent – a side effect of the bloodlust that will affect a vampire who had gone without blood for a long time.

"Well. Here goes." Hilda muttered before scooting closer towards Ethan, pressing her chest against his and leaning her head onto his shoulder, exposing the skin of her neck, both hands gripping onto the fabric of Ethan's shirt.

Eric watched with worry as he saw an almost hungry look entered his younger brother's eyes as he licked Hilda's neck. In the normal way, he would never get Hilda to do something like this, but there is simply no time to find some blood for Ethan before he fades away.

Hilda tightened her hold on the fabric of Ethan's shirt as she felt teeth prick the skin on her neck, breaking it, and a tongue began to lap up her blood. The ecstasy that most humans felt when a vampire drinks their blood wouldn't happen to her as she is part-vampire, and thus, she still had control over her senses.

Pretty soon, Hilda began to feel lightheaded as she rested her forehead against Ethan's shoulder. Her vision was darkening, and she soon began to pass out.

Eric finally decided to intervene after seeing Hilda pass out – most probably due to a severe loss of blood.

"Ethan. Stop." Eric commandeered, placing one hand on his brother's shoulder. Ethan looked up at him with half glazed-over eyes, and Eric was relieved to see the crimson red back in his eyes instead of the nearly onyx black which is usually a sign of severe hunger. "You're going to kill Hilda at this rate!"

It was like saying Hilda's name is the trigger to stop Ethan as he stopped almost instantly before his eyes rolled back into the back of his head, and he passed out. Eric sighed. "That's what happens when you go too long without blood, foolish brother of mine," he muttered as he picked Hilda up bridal style, but not before closing the puncture teeth marks on Hilda's neck with his saliva.

XXXXXX

Starlight's Hall  
Knockturn Alley

"Thank you for your patronage." Hilda muttered tiredly as the last customer left Starlight's Hall, with the bell tinkling somewhere as the door closed behind them, and she sighed in relief. "Now we can finally close up."

It had been two days after Ethan had collapsed, and he is currently stuck in bed, with Lyra keeping an eye on him. Thus, Hilda was stuck with having to run the entire bar by herself. Thankfully, Sirius and Remus were both there to give her a hand, and so did Padma.

And that currently explains the presences of all her other friends right now in Starlight's Hall when they'd heard from Padma about the current situation with Ethan.

Hermione chewed on her bottom lip nervously as she watched Hilda clean the floors of the bar with a mop in hand, several other mops and washcloths being magically enchanted to do the rest of the cleaning. A number of the other house elves were cleaning the tables and chairs of the bar as well, and one was even cleaning the bar counter.

"Hilda, maybe you should close the bar for a few days whilst Ethan is ill?" Hermione suggested.

Hilda sighed and turned towards the bushy haired girl. "I can't," she said simply. "It's near the full moon. Where will the werewolves go if they need to transform?"

Her friends exchanged looks between themselves. They have nearly forgotten that the werewolves depended on Starlight's Hall to transform on full moon nights without fear of harming others. Remus for one is always happy that he had a safe place to transform in peace at last.

Cedric had a thoughtful look on his face just then, and Jasper knew that look. "What are you thinking about, Ced?" he asked, nudging his best friend in the ribs. "I know that look of yours."

"Well, I have an idea," said Cedric thoughtfully. "I have to ask my parents first though. We still have about a week left of Christmas holidays before we're due back at school, right?"

Hilda frowned as she leaned on the mop, and nodded. "That's right," she said. "By the time we return to school, Ethan should be well enough to be up."

"Well then, if my parents agree, I could stay and help you with the bar until Ethan gets better," said Cedric, and Jasper blanched, whilst his other friends looked on incredulously. "If you will tell me what to do, then I think I can handle things here."

"I can help too," added Draco. "I've hung around here long enough to know how things worked around here anyway."

"Count me in," said Padma with a shrug. "I am staying with you until the end of the Christmas holidays anyway. It might be pretty interesting to know how to actually run a bar of this nature."

"I'll help too," said Hermione with a smile. "I'm no good at cooking, but I can help with the Potions part, as well as helping to take down orders. I have to ask my parents, but I don't think that they will mind."

"Since Cedric is chipping in, I'll help too," said Jasper with a shrug.

Hilda sighed and nodded. "Thanks, you guys," she said. She then glanced at the clock. "Draco, it's getting late. You should get going."

"Yeah, you're right," said Draco, sliding off the stool. "Sure you'll be okay with closing up on your own?"

"I'll help her, Draco," said Cedric. "Jasper, you should get going too. You're meeting Scott and the rest tomorrow for some Quidditch, aren't you?"

"Yeah," said Jasper, nodding his head. "See you then."

They both then exited out of the door, with the bell tinkling somewhere in the bar as they did so. Hilda then sighed as both Draco and Jasper left, leaning on the mop, studying her friends intently. Maybe it is about time that she comes clean with her



identity. She doesn't feel good hiding this from her friends, and she feels that she can trust them.

Hilda sighed. "...Hermione? Cedric? Padma? Can you come with me for a second? I am going to tell Jasper and Neville this too, but I'll let you guys know first," she said, and Cedric raised a curious eyebrow. Hilda then sighed. "...I need to tell you guys something."

A/N: How is this chapter? Good or bad? And so, Hilda will be coming clean with her identity with her friends. Next chapter, Ethan had a most surprising visitor in the form of his old friend. I've already given you a hint to his identity. A cookie to anyone who could manage to guess it right!

Anyway, I hope that you like this chapter, and please read and review!

(1) The Midnight Society refers to the creatures of the night like the vampires, werewolves, the light elves, etc. They were magical creatures who lived for the night, and were thus dubbed as the 'Midnight Society' among themselves, though those wizards and witches from the 'Light' side dubbed them as 'creatures that walk the night'.

## Chapter Nine: Nicholas Flamel

The week without Ethan's help at Starlight's Hall is one of the most hectic that Hilda had ever known, especially considering the fact that it is also the full moon week when they're at their busiest, and Remus couldn't help much during that time as well. Thankfully, Sirius had hang around the bar often enough to know just how things works, and he was quite a great help to Hilda, along with Cedric, Draco, Padma, Hermione and Jasper.

It took quite a number of broken plates (Draco and Jasper), messing up of orders (Padma), freaking out when some strange customer tried hitting on her (Hermione), and nearly two days of the usual routine before they all got used to the work around the bar.

And even though Hilda didn't realise it, all of her friends quite admired her when they realised just how much work was required to be done at the bar when Starlight's Hall was at its busiest during nights, and just how much Hilda and Ethan actually have to do when it was just the two of them before, and they could hardly manage when there were seven of them present right now.

Hilda's friends were all quite quiet ever since the raven haired girl had dropped the bombshell regarding her heritage.

All her friends were extremely quiet and shocked for nearly an hour when Hilda had told them about her background and heritage and just who she is. But after numerous explanations that she didn't want anyone treating her like some weapon the moment that she'd returned to the wizarding world (Dumbledore), and that she didn't want anyone befriending her just because of her name (Weasley), every single one of her friends had accepted her explanation after numerous other similar explanations, and they all promised to keep it quiet for Hilda, each inwardly pleased that Hilda had actually trusted them enough with that piece of information.

Though it did answer several questions for those who have been brought up in the wizarding world like Cedric, Jasper, Neville and Padma.

The reason why Sirius Black and Remus Lupin have suddenly starting hanging out around Starlight's Hall even if it is the workplace

of the latter, and why Sirius Black is extremely fond of Hilda, often calling her 'pup' or 'cub' or even addresses her as 'his goddaughter'.

Nearly every prominent wizarding family in Great Britain knew that Lily and James Potter have named Sirius Black as their only child's godparent, and had also named Remus Lupin as her other godfather just in case something had happened to Sirius, and Cedric and Jasper have their suspicions in the beginning when those two men have been so friendly with Hilda, and why Ethan had fought so hard to have Sirius to be released from Azkaban.

"Finally, we can close up." Hermione heaved a sigh of relief as the last customer walked through the doors, with the bell tinkling somewhere in the bar, and some random house elf flipped the sign on the door to 'Closed'. The bushy haired girl then sighed and rested her head onto her arms at the table that she is sitting at, her feet worn out from running about all day, with her fingers aching with taking so many orders. "I have no idea that Hilda has to do this almost every single day of her life. I really admire her for being able to manage with all the jobs single-handedly and still manage to keep her cool when we were running about like chickens on steroids even with each of us handling one aspect of the bar to prevent ourselves from losing our heads!"

The rest of her friends laughed tiredly, all tired from the work involved, though Sirius didn't look so tired out as he had been helping Ethan and Remus with the work at the bar ever since he was released, though he technically didn't have to work another day in his life with the amount of gold that he has.

"Yeah, I second that," said Jasper tiredly, leaning with his back against the bar counter.

Cedric glanced around just then, wondering where Hilda is as he hadn't seen her for the past hour. And then again, with how busy that they have been that day, Hilda could walk past him, and he wouldn't even notice, as he had been dealing with a pair of very disgruntled Veelas earlier.

The thing that is different from most bars about this job aspect of Starlight's Hall is that the customers of the bar tend to be non-humans or even part-humans, though they do get the occasional witch or wizard frequently. And as such, the customers that

Starlight's Hall get tend to get very high strung at times, particularly the werewolves when it's near the full moon, and the staff working at the bar must be alert and be able to subdue any of their customers who have 'snapped' within moments.

Cedric could now understand just how Hilda could manage to subdue that mountain troll all those months back when it had attacked Hermione in the girls' bathroom on the second floor, even though she had broken her ankle when doing so.

Unknown to Cedric however, Hilda's duties at the bar is part of the reason why she had been able to subdue the troll so easily. The other part of the reason is the fact that Ethan had trained her in combat, and Hilda could easily take on a fully trained wizard Auror or two, as she had been trained in the vampire aspects of combat, something that Sirius had found out when he was literally thrown on the back by Hilda just because he had managed to startle her one morning when she was in the bathroom.

When Remus had heard that, he had laughed so hard and long that he was in danger of passing out due to the lack of oxygen, much to Sirius's embarrassment, though the man was proud that his little goddaughter was capable of such a feat, as Sirius and James have been at the top tier of the Aurors during the war.

"Hilda is in the back, Cedric," said Draco suddenly, and everyone present turned towards the honey-blond haired teen who looked extremely embarrassed at having been caught looking around. Jasper had a grin on his face that Cedric definitely doesn't like in the least. The Malfoy heir grinned at Cedric as well, and the two girls giggled to themselves. "She's making some Dreamless Sleep potions as we've just ran out of our latest stock. I usually help her with the potions, but you can go and help her if you like. We'll do the cleaning up."

Cedric blushed and mumbled something incoherent beneath his breath before rushing into the backroom so quickly that Jasper could have sworn that he had Apparated if it wasn't because of two things: one, Cedric isn't of age to Apparate yet; and two, Starlight's Hall was warded with all kinds of vampire wards and spells which basically made wizard magic next to near useless in the bar, and wizards are also unable to Apparate in and out. Even the Floo connection in their fireplace is only made applicable to very few – those that Ethan

could trust with his life. There is also a vampire spell on the bar that made it next to near impossible to be torched and burned down, or having the place destroyed.

Jasper grinned at Draco as Cedric rushed into the backroom. "You know, Drake, I do believe that angel wings, a halo, along with a bow and arrow kind of suits you," he said with a grin, causing the girls to erupt into laughter at the mental image that had been conjured into the heads of everyone present. "Playing Cupid for those two, are you?"

Draco grinned. "They have been giving each other these weird looks ever since the start of school term," he admitted. "I seriously doubt that anyone but us have noticed, as we knew them best, and Hilda had actually managed to keep her feelings from getting known. But those 'looks' have been driving me crazy!"

"Well, they just need a little push into the right direction." Padma quipped. She then grinned. "What's the bet that they'll get together by our second year?"

Hermione snorted. "With Hilda being the way that she is? I'll give them until our fourth year," she quipped.

Jasper grinned. "You're on."

Hilda didn't look up from the cauldron that she was stirring when she heard footsteps entering the backroom where she is in, and where the kitchen was in the other cubicle of the backroom, and where the potions cabinet as well as the first aid kit were kept in this room that she is currently in.

"Drake, you know where the gloves are, and the usual drill," she muttered, not taking her eyes off of her work, as even though the Dreamless Sleep potion is a pretty basic potion to brew (for her at least), it is also the most delicate, and requires the most care when potion brewing.

A low chuckle reached her ears, and Hilda turned startled-looking eyes towards the owner of the voice only to see Cedric leaning against the doorway, a smile on his handsome face. "Sorry to disappoint, but I'm not Draco," he said. He then grinned. "Would you mind if I become your assistant for the day?"

Hilda sighed but smiled. "Draco put you up to this, didn't he?" she stated more than questioned. Cedric didn't answer, and Hilda then laughed. "The dragon hide gloves are in the cabinet. Grab a pair, and then I'll appreciate some help here."

Cedric laughed, but nodded, relieved that she didn't say an outright 'no', before Cedric did what he was told, and quickly strapped on the dragon hide gloves onto his hands before standing next to Hilda.

The mixture in the cauldron was already a silvery misty colour – indicating that the potion is almost done, and Cedric raised a brow. Most third years that he knew couldn't even brew this potion properly, and Hilda could brew it with ease by herself. Granted, he knew that Hilda probably brewed most, if not all of the potions that Starlight's Hall uses, but still...

Now Cedric understood why Professor Severus Snape, the scariest teacher at Hogwarts is so fond of Hilda.

His Potions master had never paid anyone any attention unless they're his closest friends or if they're adept potion brewers and also loved the art. Cedric could guess that Hilda probably fell into the first or second category, as he simply can't see Hilda loving potions brewing. She seemed to be more interested in the art of runes and actually understanding how a spell works, judging from all of his past conversations with her when it comes to schoolwork.

"It just needs another three stirs before it's done." Hilda explained, looking up at Cedric as she is still a good two and a half heads shorter than the older boy. "Can you manage to finish up the rest of the potion whilst I get the potion vials to fill the potion in?"

Cedric smiled and nodded. "Just stirring, right? I'm competent enough at Potions at Hogwarts to actually get an 'Exceed Expectations,'" he said, and Hilda nodded before handing the ladle to Cedric who felt his cheeks grew warm as their hands brushed against each other, even though they are both wearing gloves.

'What the hell am I thinking?' Cedric thought furiously to himself as he stirred the cauldron slowly, as Hilda rummaged about in the potions cabinet behind him for some empty potion vials. 'She's my friend! And not to mention that she is two years younger than me!

And I am thirteen! We are way too young to even have a relationship of any kind!

A voice interrupted his thoughts, and Cedric looked up only to see an amused but concerned looking Hilda staring at him, a number of empty potion vials sitting on the table in front of the cauldron, all with their corks out.

"Cedric, I think that's enough stirring for now," said Hilda with amusement, and Cedric blushed before resting the ladle against the side of the cauldron. "What are you thinking about that you didn't even hear me calling me?" Cedric was speechless, and Hilda smiled a small smile. "Well, I guess that it is really none of my business. Would you help me pour the potion into the vials?"

Cedric smiled and nodded. "Sure," he said. "It's pretty nice and fun to work with you on this. Jasper never failed to blow a cauldron up at every Potions lesson unless I keep an extra set of eyes on him. Professor Snape had even classified him as 'a hazard to his Potions lab, and to everyone around him'."

Hilda said nothing, but continued filling the potion vials with the Dreamless Sleep potion, as Cedric did the same beside her. But the sharp eyes of the honey-blonde haired teen noticed that a light flush had spread over her cheeks when Cedric had complimented her, and the teen smiled to himself.

'She's kind of cute when she blushes like that.'

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Two days after Hilda had returned to Hogwarts with her friends can find one Ethan Nightwing up and about, giving both Remus and Sirius the night off as they've been working themselves to the bone during the time when he was 'ill'.

Before Hilda had left however, she had left explicit instructions to Sirius, Remus and Lyra that Ethan is not to work himself into near collapse, and neither is he allowed to go without any blood for more than two weeks. Lyra is actually more than happy to fulfil Hilda's request, as the head house elf at Starlight's Hall was scared nearly half to death when Ethan had actually collapsed, and Sirius was also

more than happy to help Hilda to 'keep an eye on Ethan' as he oh so eloquently put it.

Ethan sighed and shook his head as he cleaned an empty wine glass with a damp cloth. He just got ill one time. Just one lousy time, and Hilda worked herself up into a frenzy. Okay, fine, so maybe it is his fault that he forgot to go hunting until his blood frenzy had acted up, and he nearly ended up fading away if it wasn't because of Hilda...

Okay, maybe he can see just why Hilda is so adamant on Lyra, Sirius and Remus checking on Ethan every now and then, and had actually stated that if she doesn't receive a letter from Ethan within a week, she will get Draco or Cedric to get their parents to check in on him.

And just as Ethan is about to close the bar early as most, if not all of their patrons have left, a bell tinkled somewhere in the bar as someone entered, with a dark cloak covering their face and most of the body. The only thing that could be seen are the dark boots that the individual is wearing.

Ethan frowned slightly, and out of the corner of his eye, he saw the two goblins that the head goblin at Gringotts have supplied for guards lift their spears threateningly at the unknown's back before Ethan made a silent hand motion to stand down which they did, though still eyeing the individual suspiciously.

Ethan understood why too, as most people who came in here never covered up their faces unless they're one of Dumbledore's people, or one of the 'Light' supporters. Nearly all of the 'Light' supporters which the goblins and Ethan have thrown out usually covered up their faces to conceal their identity. Charms and Polyjuice Potions don't work in Starlight's Hall, as there is a special type of vampire magic surrounding the entrance which would trigger an alarm if anyone having a charm on them or under the effects of Polyjuice Potion stepped through the entrance of the bar.

Ethan raised an eyebrow as the man – Ethan is fairly sure that it's a man at least judging from his scent – sat down in the stool at the bar counter in front of him. "Can I get you anything?" he asked politely. He knew better than to judge until this man gave him a reason to do so.



"A drink of your best please, Ethan," said the man, his hands reaching up to lower the hood of the cloak that he is wearing.

Ethan turned sharply as the man addressed him by his name.

Most of his regular patrons knew his name, sure, but he is fairly certain that this man is not one of them as he had a pretty good memory for names, faces and scents which had actually come into useful often when he knew a regular patron's preferences for food and drinks.

"Do I know you?" asked Ethan, a tone of wariness in his tone as the hood was lowered completely, and the vampire's eyes went wide at the sight of that youthful face with those honey-brown eyes and the head of silver hair. "Nicholas?"

Nicholas Flamel smiled at Ethan, not seeming to have aged a day ever since the last time that Ethan had seen him...nearly a hundred years ago.

If Ethan had to state a physical age, he would say that Nicholas looked to be in his early twenties – just like Ethan. And then again, most vampires stayed young and youthful. Even the oldest vampire that Ethan knew of – Alucard Falsoss, Jessica's grandfather and the head of the royal clan of the western region of the vampire territories whose clan lived up in the mountains, seemed almost like he is in his thirties, and Ethan knew for a fact that Lord Alucard Falsoss had lived well over eight thousand years.

Wizards often hunted their kind down, along with most of the part humans or non-humans, and that is why they have gone into hiding, and why there are so few of their kind left. Eric and Elton both only allowed Ethan to go into the wizarding world to open a bar of this nature only because of the fact that he had to raise Hilda among humans, and also because Ethan is much more powerful than the average vampire, being the second son of the royal family of the Eastern vampire clan, the Nightwing clan.

Nicholas Flamel smiled at Ethan. "Hey Ethan," he greeted. "It's been awhile."

Ethan had put up the 'Closed' sign on the door, and had all the house elves retire for the night, along with switching off nearly all the lights on the ground floor save for the single light at the bar counter which enabled them visibility.

"So what is it, Nick?" asked Ethan with a sigh. "I hadn't seen you ever since the First War which the Muggles waged among themselves, and you had taken your wife and had disappeared. You wouldn't have risked showing yourself like this, especially since nearly everyone in the magical world knew of you and your creation of the Philosopher's Stone which is the sole reason why you had taken Perenelle and had gone into hiding for well over a century."

Nicholas smiled wanly. "As observant as always, Ethan," he remarked, sipping from his glass. He then sighed. "I need a favour. It's about the Philosopher's Stone that I had created nearly half a millennia ago."

Ethan paused in his cleaning and listened carefully as his old friend told him everything about the Stone and how a certain manipulative old man was involved, and his face grew darker and more ominous that he didn't even notice the fact that he was increasing his strength onto the glass that he is holding until it is dangerously close to breaking in his hand.

"Wait wait. You're telling me that that great fool of a wizard, and an even poorer excuse for a human being, had hid such a dangerous and powerful object as well as such a widely sought after magical object like the Philosopher's Stone in a fucking school that is full of children?"

Crack.

Nicholas Flamel winced as the wine glass cracked into several pieces in Ethan's hand, the broken glass pieces digging into his skin, and yet, the vampire didn't even notice or feel it as he is glaring at Nicholas.

Good Heavens!

If looks could kill, Nicholas Flamel would be six feet under, Philosopher's Stone or not.

"What the hell possesses you to do such a crazy thing?"

Nicholas sighed for what seemed to be the hundredth time that day. "Don't ask me. I don't even know how Albus Dumbledore had even managed to convince me to part with the Stone when he had paid me a visit last year, stating that someone is after the Stone, and that it is safer to entrust it to him. It was then that I had agreed to part with it." He then sighed, and Ethan even seemed to be calming down some. "But I had assumed that he was going to hide it somewhere safe, not in a place where children roamed about!"

Ethan sighed, slowly picking out the glass pieces currently stuck in his skin. "I'll be honest with you, Nicholas," he said seriously. "Between Dumbledore and Voldemort, I'll pick Voldemort any day. At least I know that Voldemort wouldn't stab me in the back the moment that my back is turned, and that I can at least trust him to hold up his end of the bargain as long as we worked together. For however long that is. That man's morals might be a little...questionable, but he has honour. If he promised you something, he'll fulfil it, no matter how much he dislikes it."

Nicholas frowned. "I'm not really all that fond of the Dark Lord myself, but I guess I can trust you," he said reluctantly. "You hadn't lied to me, and neither have you asked me for anything, or even used me like how Albus did. That is only part of the reason why I had taken Perenelle with me and left. I'm tired of getting used like pawns in a chess game."

He then looked at Ethan in the eye seriously. "I'm going to tell you something that no one alive in this world knew, not even my wife. When I'd created the Philosopher's Stone, I had added a safety device to it that ensured that apart from me and my wife, no one else can use it. Anyone else who isn't me and my wife who have tried using the Stone whether for wealth or for immortal life will die instantly. Even the Immortals (1) like the vampires and elves. I don't trust Albus completely like how I did with you, Ethan. I wasn't sure what he wanted with the Stone, but just in case, I've increased the safety measures on it. And when I'd heard that he'd hidden the Stone in the school, I've changed my mind. The Stone is too dangerous to be left intact. I want you to destroy it so that no one else can use it."

Ethan raised an eyebrow. "And you'll trust me to do that?" he said incredulously. "Nicholas, I am a vampire, you know? Even if I do not have to depend on the Stone for eternal life as I am an Immortal, technically speaking, there are still many things that I can do with the Stone. For instance, I can wipe out the wizard race with the power of the Stone. My kind, along with all those who have walked the path of the night have never been fond of the wizards. Aren't you afraid that I will do something like that?"

"No, you wouldn't do something like that, Ethan," said Nicholas confidently. "I know you. You would do no such thing unless you had a very good reason to do so." He then sighed. "Just as a last favour to me, Ethan. Please. Destroy the Philosopher's Stone for me. If I had known what creating the Stone actually entails, I would never have done it. I had to actually watch as my daughter dies before me, as she refused to use the power of the Stone, and wished to die with her husband and my grandchildren. Ever since the creation of the Stone, we have to face countless enemies gunning for the Stone, as well as the recipe of how to create it. And not to mention that both Perenelle and I have lived for countless centuries now, watching as everyone that we both knew and loved dies one after the other, and we still continued living on and looking just like we are on the day when we've created the Stone."

He sighed. "I'm tired, Ethan. I'm really tired. So is Perenelle. She wishes to rest too. As am I. But we both knew that we can't do that yet as long as the Stone still exists. We created that Stone, and as its creators, we both knew the danger and risks that such a powerful magical object actually carries. I want you to destroy it. I know that the vampires have ways to destroy such a powerful magical object that is created by the hands of Man. If your kind has ways to kill and destroy an Immortal without leaving a trace of them behind, you can destroy the Stone. Please Ethan. As a last favour to me, please destroy the Stone. I don't want it falling into the wrong hands, and see it being used for evil. That's the last thing that I actually want. Before I die, I at least want to see the Stone destroyed."

Ethan was silent for a long time before he sighed. "I guess I can see where you're coming from," he said. "Lord Alucard has told me stories when Jessica and I were only mere younglings. He is quite possibly the oldest vampire or living being on existence. The only other Immortal that I knew of that is quite as old as Lord Alucard is the king of the light elves. Both of them are well over ten thousand

years old now. Probably even longer. Lord Alucard had told me this once. When one had lived as long as he did, they tend to get tired too. I guess I can see where you're coming from. But whilst Lord Alucard had his friends and family with him, you don't. At least, most of them are not in this world any longer. Whilst we vampires still could communicate with the spirits of the dead if we wished to, you don't have that form of luxury unless you wished to delve deep into the art of Necromancy – the art of the dead."

Nicholas only nodded at this.

The vampires have a way to communicate with the spirits of their deceased friends and family, though this knowledge is only entitled to their own kind. Not even the witches and wizards, and the other members of those who walked the path of the night knew this.

Deep in the Dark Forest where the Nightwing clan resides, there is a patch of forest more commonly known as 'the ring' where white trees created a 'ring' of sorts, and silvery vines hung down from those aged old trees probably as old as the earth itself. If a vampire touches one of those vines, and if they concentrate hard enough, they could hear the voices of the dead, and even the wisdom of the Mother – the 'deity' of the vampires, the All Mother, Lilith.

There is actually a reason why most magical arts that deal with spirits and the dead are forbidden, and there are very few who actually choose to take on the studies of the art of Necromancy, as it is still a type of magical studies that several in the wizarding community frowned upon.

"It's just...we're seriously tired now," said Nicholas with a sigh. "Isn't Hilda attending Hogwarts now? Couldn't she possibly remove the Stone from under Dumbledore's nose without him knowing?"

Ethan raised an eyebrow. "By what you've said, I'm guessing that you don't want that old coot knowing that you had the Stone destroyed, do you?" he drawled, and Nicholas shook his head. "Not that I'm surprised. I did tell you that that man can't be trusted as far as you could throw him, and if what I've seen you during your duel with that wizard is of any indication, then you could throw things pretty damn far when you want to." Ethan then sighed. "Well, knowing Hilda, she probably has a way to destroy the Stone without Dumbledore or anyone else knowing. She's pretty good at stealth.

There are times when even I couldn't find her, and I'm the one who had actually trained her!"

Nicholas sighed. "Get her to destroy the Stone as soon as she could. Such a powerful magical object like the Philosopher's Stone being around in this world is much too dangerous," he said. "I don't even know what had possessed me back then to even create the Stone. I must be drunk."

Ethan sighed. "Well, just leave it to Hilda," he promised. "She'll get it done."

Nicholas nodded. "I know. I trust you both. Also, there is another reason behind my arrival here today. I have some news for your ears only."

Ethan raised an eyebrow at Nicholas's serious demeanour. "Why do I have the feeling that I'm not going to like what you're going to say?" he drawled.

Nicholas grinned at his old friend before turning serious. "Are you aware of a Prophecy made about Voldemort and Hilda Lillian Potter during the war?"

Ethan eyed Nicholas sharply.

He can't possibly know about Hilda, could he? Oh, who is he kidding? Ethan nearly groaned when he saw the knowing smile on Nicholas's face. Of course he knew about Hilda! Nicholas Flamel is also called the 'All-Knowing Alchemist' for a reason.

"Yeah, I've heard rumours about it," said Ethan carefully. "Jessica told me about it several years back when I've found Hilda. What about it?"

Nicholas sighed before reciting the wizard Prophecy about the Dark Lord and the one who would vanquish him. "'The one with the power to vanquish the Dark Lord approaches. Born to those who have thrice defied him, born as the seventh month dies. And the Dark Lord will mark him as his equal, but he will have power the Dark Lord knows not. And either must die at the hand of the other for neither can live whilst the other survives.'" Nicholas ended the Prophecy as he glanced at Ethan. "Perenelle used to work in the

Department of Mysteries where she worked with Prophecies, and is an Unspeakable. She told me something interesting about Prophecies, and this is in her exact words: 'As long as the parties involved do not wish it, the Prophecy can't happen'."

Ethan frowned and put up a hand. "Wait, you meant that the prophecy between Hilda and Voldemort..."

Nicholas nodded. "It won't happen as long as one of them does not wish it to happen. And correct me if I'm wrong, but didn't Hilda state once that whatever that Voldemort does is of no concern of hers ever since Eve had died unless the entire world goes boom?" he questioned, and Ethan nodded, his face darkening at the mention of the death of his favourite cousin at the hands of wizard vampire hunters nearly six years ago. "And Perenelle had even stated that she doesn't think that the prophecy between them both is real as well."

Ethan blinked at that. He wasn't well versed in stuff like prophecies as he wasn't born in a vampire clan that deals with the Sight and all that spiritual stuff like Jessica's clan. "Whatever do you mean?" asked Ethan, bewildered.

"Ethan, how much do you know about the prophecy that was made that foretells the Fall of the Dark Lord?" asked Nicholas seriously.

"Not a lot, I'm afraid," said Ethan with a shrug. "Only stuff that Jessica had told me, and from what my sources in the Ministry of Magic have told me as well. I only know that the prophecy was made known to Albus Dumbledore by a woman by the name of Sybil Trelawney during the climax of the war. She's the descendant of Cassandra Trelawney, a famous Seer who is so famous worldwide that even Muggles everywhere would know her name, though they only know her as a famous fortune teller that had lived several centuries ago."

"That's it in a sense," said Nicholas with a nod, moving his wine glass about in his hand. "But you aren't aware of one little bitty fact that is left unknown to most: Cassandra Trelawney is the only one in her family with Seer blood. She was actually adopted into the Trelawney family, though this fact wasn't actually known to most. I went to school with her. She told me so. Therefore, it's not possible for Sybil Trelawney to actually foretell a prophecy. In fact, look at the

prophecy again. It actually stated that 'And the Dark Lord will mark him as his equal, but he will have power the Dark Lord knows not.' The 'saviour' is actually a boy, and Hilda is a girl. Granted, it might not actually show much significance, but if the saviour is actually supposed to be a guy, why didn't Voldemort go after the only male baby that fits the prophecy: Neville Longbottom? Why did he choose Hilda? With all these details, I can safely say that the prophecy is actually a fake."

Ethan nearly groaned out loud, covering his eyes with his hand. "This is just great." He almost groaned. "That means that the Dark Lord has actually been tricked. Though I'm not sure whether to feel relieved or not that Hilda will not be on Voldemort's 'hit list'."

Nicholas smiled. "What are you going to do, Ethan?"

XXXXXX

Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry  
Scotland

Meanwhile, in Hogwarts School, Hilda Evans is hopelessly lost.

It wasn't really her fault, per se. She had been trying to avoid the usual group of first year Gryffindors, as the lot of them have taken to insulting her whenever they see her which she usually ignored, but it gets annoying after awhile, and she soon took to avoiding them whenever she sees them.

Though the Weasley twins have taken it upon themselves to prank the hell out of the first years in their House if they gave Hilda or any of her friends any trouble as the redheaded twins have a soft spot for the raven haired girl ever since their early childhood days.

It is always amusing to see all the Gryffindor first years (save for Neville) enter the Great Hall sprouting canary feathers one day, then robes that flashed rainbow colours the next. And until today, no one had ever gotten enough evidence to prove that it is the Weasley twins behind it.

And thus, whilst trying to avoid the Gryffindor first years, Hilda actually found herself hopelessly lost when she had found herself on some unknown corridor. It was whilst she was wandering around in



circles for what seemed like hours when she spotted an open door that she didn't notice before, and pushed it further open, wondering if it is a classroom of some sort, and that maybe she could figure out just where she is.

What the hell were the founders of the school thinking when they have actually made this school so damn huge anyway?

The room itself that Hilda had stepped in didn't seem to have been in use for several years as thick layers of dust and dirt laid everywhere, and the room is empty. But there was just one thing inside that had caught Hilda's attention immediately.

A tall mirror that almost reaches to the ceiling, with incite designs and cravings on the sides of it, and also with some text at the top of the mirror.

"Huh? A mirror?" Hilda muttered to herself, moving forwards to investigate this mirror. She then read the words above the mirror silently to herself. "The Mirror of Erised." She muttered before glancing at the long line of words below the first.

erised straeh ruoy tub ecaf ruoy ton wohsi

Hilda raised an eyebrow. 'Is it in Elvish or something?' she wondered, and she then frowned. 'No, it's not possible. Jessica mentioned once that the Mirror of Erised is created by human hands, and no human understood Elvish unless they've been accepted into their fold. If so, then...'

Hilda glanced up at the words again and soon managed to decode the message within mere moments. She just has to read the entire message from back to front! Whoever made this mirror obviously need some lessons in writing code!

"'I show not your face but your hearts' desire'." Hilda muttered to herself, having decoded the message on the mirror. She then smiled to herself. "The Mirror of Erised, huh? One of the more amazing things created by human hands."

The dark haired girl then approached the mirror, curious to know just what she would see in the mirror, and she immediately blushed red

to the roots of her hair when she saw just what she had seen. 'Oh Lilith... I'm too young to be thinking of such a thing!'

She was there in the mirror – an older her. And so were Lily and James Potter, both smiling proudly at her, with a hand each on her shoulders. Remus and Sirius were there as well, though both men looked healthier than they currently were – with no signs of the Azkaban stay that Sirius had gone through, and no sign of having starved for years because of his werewolf side that Remus had gone through. Ethan was present too, as well accepted into the fold like everyone else, and so was a raven haired girl that looked a lot like Hilda, only with crimson red eyes like Ethan, which made Hilda smile sadly.

'Eve...'

But another person was in the mirror as well.

A handsome honey-blond haired teen who looked older than he currently is, with his arm wrapped around mirror-Hilda's shoulders, and both the youngsters were wearing identical-looking wedding bands on their ring fingers.

Hilda took one look at the mirror before turning around and almost ran from the room, muttering something below her breath all the while, forcing her mind to take away the image that she had just seen. "He is my friend. He is my friend. He is my friend. I shouldn't even be thinking of such a thing. Furthermore, I'm part-vampire."

And it might have been Hilda's imagination, but she could have sworn that she heard someone laughing at her in her mind as she did so.

(1) Members of the Midnight Society who tends to live a very long life or even eternally like the vampires and the elves are referred to as the Immortals

## Chapter Ten: Through the Trapdoor

### Great Hall

#### Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry

Hilda almost snorted her goblet of pumpkin juice up her nose when she heard what Padma and Hermione have to say, and tried hard to stifle her giggles. "He did what?"

Neville coughed, trying hard to keep the grin off his face without much success as he answered. "Ron and Seamus got a week's worth of detentions with Flich along with a hundred point deduction off Gryffindor House when they were caught out of bed after hours," he answered. He then grinned. "Gryffindor House wasn't too happy with them as we were in the lead for the House Cup with Ravenclaw and Slytherin."

"Apparently, something about a dragon egg was involved." Blaise Zabini grinned. "That gamekeeper Hagrid somehow acquired a dragon egg sometime during the last week, and was trying to hatch it in his cabin."

Hilda stared incredulously. "Forgive me for saying this," she said politely. "But you did just say that that giant oaf just tried to hatch a dragon's egg in his cabin, which if I'm not mistaken, is a wooden house, did you not?"

Blaise nodded with an ear shitting grin. "You heard me right, Hilda," he answered.

Hilda sighed. "I'm starting to think that he must have his head screwed on backwards," she muttered. "Dragons can grow up to fifty feet tall, and if memory serves me right, they breathe fire. Did Hagrid's house suddenly become fire repellent or something? And keeping a dragon is highly illegal unless you're a Dragon Keeper, especially since dragons are too conspicuous for the Muggles to ignore."

She then turned back to her breakfast of bacon and some eggs.

It was currently breakfast time, and as usual, the whole group of them were at the Ravenclaw table in the Great Hall, since everyone

were used to them sitting at the Ravenclaw table by now, even if several of them were not of Ravenclaw House.

That day marked the last day of exam week, and they have spent the entire week before exam week cramming and studying for the exams. Hermione was especially ferocious then, much to Draco's annoyance, as the bushy haired girl had kicked just about everyone who had managed to get on her bad side of late, unleashing her ferocious temper on them, which is nearly everyone sans for Hilda who somehow knew how to calm her best friend down.

The lot of them have been burning the midnight oil for days, or weeks even before the exams began...just like everyone in Ravenclaw House, and they usually took refuge in Ravenclaw Tower as the students of that House are a studious lot, and would welcome anyone who took pride in their studies.

Hermione had nearly driven everyone mad with her insistence on studying for the exams, even the parts that they were quite clear about and could probably recite in their sleep. Hilda and Draco were okay about the exams as they both have plenty of practice with Potions with them always helping out at Starlight's Hall and with Severus' tutoring them both in potions ever since they were old enough to read. The spell work isn't too much problem as well since Remus is a pretty excellent tutor, and the werewolf had given them plenty of private tutoring during the holidays as well.

That day is the last day of exam week, with the third years (Cedric and Jasper) having the final papers and practical of Transfiguration and Charms, with the first years only having Potions' theory and practical, along with Herbology and History of Magic papers to take, then they would all be able to relax for a bit until the exam results came in.

Neville is a walking bundle of nerves ever since the previous night as Potions is quite easily his worst subject thanks to his fear of the Potions Master. As for History of Magic, it is quite easily everyone's worst subject since History of Magic lessons is usually considered 'sleeping time' as Professor Binns is so boring during those lessons that his endless drone could quite easily put anyone to sleep within moments.

"Apparently, Weasley and Finnegan took it upon themselves to 'save Hagrid' from being chartered off to Azkaban prison by delivering the dragon egg to some dragon tamers that they've contacted." Jasper answered, grinning. "My guess is that the Weasleys' second brother is involved, Charlie Weasley. That guy is a dragon tamer upon leaving Hogwarts. A waste really, as he is a damn good Seeker, and could probably play for England if he hadn't decided to chase dragons instead."

Hilda frowned to herself, a sudden thought coming to her. She don't really like the gamekeeper of the school, as in her opinion, that half-giant is just another one of Dumbledore's puppets, being played for like a chess piece on the chessboard even without realising it.

She had a really bad experience with the half-giant once about three years ago when the man had come in as a customer to Starlight's Hall. The half-giant is likeable at first, until he started saying something about 'the goodness of Dumbledore' and 'the evil of the dark creatures' which had the instant effect to cause Ethan to throw the half-giant out of the bar. Head first.

It was around that point in time when Dumbledore started sending his people into Starlight's Hall, not that it had ever succeeded once. That is also another reason why Hilda had tried not to go down into the grounds of the school if at all possible, as it minimizes the chances of her running into the half-giant.

And on that note, where the hell did the half-giant get a dragon egg when one is rare enough as it is, and it is also highly illegal?

"Hilda?" Hilda blinked and turned towards Hermione who was looking at her with curiosity. "We should get going. It's about time for the Potions' paper."

XXXXXX

Soon, the exams were over, much to the relief of all Hogwarts' students. Though the fact that the exams were over didn't stop Hermione in the least from talking about it, as it turned out that she liked to go over their exams after they have done it, much to everyone's chagrin. Ravenclaws are a pretty studious bunch who liked staying atop of their studies, but Hermione really takes the cake. Draco in particular wasn't too happy about it.

Cedric and Jasper, the only third years among their little rag-tag group were the first among them to finish their papers as the two third years only have two papers to take on that last day of exam week, whilst the first years have three. As such, the two third years could be seen waiting for them outside the History of Magic classroom when they've finished their papers.

Blaise sighed in relief when they all stepped out of Hogwarts, and onto the school grounds, heading towards the direction of the school lake where they always relaxed at. "Finally, exams are over," he said. "Thank Merlin for that! We now have two weeks to relax before the results come in, and then it'll be time for the summer holidays!"

Everyone laughed, though that laughter was quickly cut short when a fifth year Ravenclaw prefect whom the Ravenclaws recognised as Penelope Clearwater rushed up to them, a number of books in her arms.

"I've finally found you!" she said, slightly out of breath. "Hilda, Professor Flitwick is looking for you." Hilda blinked owlishly. "You've got an urgent fire-call waiting for you in his office. Your guardian is calling, and it seems urgent."

Professor Flitwick's Office  
Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry

Hilda practically shot off like a bullet the moment that Penelope had delivered her message, wondering if something bad had happened back home, as Ethan almost never uses the Floo network to send her a message, usually sticking to owls instead.

The tiny Charms professor was waiting for Hilda outside his office which all Ravenclaws knew the way towards, as all Ravenclaw first years have to meet with their Head of House for a private meeting with the tiny professor to talk about how they're settling into the school and all that. Professor Flitwick had ushered Hilda into his office before the door closed shut behind her, the tiny professor giving Hilda some privacy in his office.

Ethan's head was currently within the fireplace, with the flames licking all about his ears, yet he didn't even seem to feel it. Hilda

immediately got onto her hands and knees in front of the fire, all her books collapsing to the ground in a heap as she did so.

"Ethan, what happened?" she asked breathlessly. "Did something happen back home?"

"No, just calm down. It isn't anything like that." Ethan reassured her. "Nothing bad had happened. It's just something that I need you to do, and I don't trust the message to be delivered via owl post." Hilda raised an eyebrow at that, Ethan sighed. "Look, I've just received a visit from my old friend Nicholas Flamel about a week and a half earlier."

Hilda can only stare. She knew of Nicholas Flamel, naturally, as she had met the man and his wife once when she was pretty small, and she had liked them both. The man had taught her what she knew about alchemy, blood magic and rune magic, and she had developed an interest in it, much to Nicholas' delight.

"And?"

Ethan sighed. "Apparently, that idiot Nick somehow handed his precious Philosopher's Stone over to Albus Dumbledore before the start of the school year for 'safekeeping'," he said sarcastically. "And guess where that senile old goat had decided to keep the Stone?" He asked wearily.

Hilda sighed. "Let me guess," she said sarcastically. "In Hogwarts itself?"

"You've got it right in one," said Ethan wearily. "Keeping such a dangerous object like the Philosopher's Stone which many would kill over in a school that is full of children?" He sighed. "That man is going senile." He then cleared his throat. "Anyway, I got a little job for you. It's really Nick's request, but he wants you to retrieve the Stone. I didn't tell you before this as you've got exams to worry about, and the Stone is pretty safe...so far."

Hilda sighed. "Understood."

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Later that night, Hilda crept silently out of the Ravenclaw common room, making sure not to wake Padma and Hermione who both shared a dormitory with her. Just before she stepped fully out of the common room however, she muttered a spell in a strange language beneath her breath. It sounded like that of Parseltongue – the language of the snakes, yet not like it as well. The shadows around the halls seemed to weave around Hilda's body, allowing her to blend in together with the shadows before she stepped out of the common room.

It didn't take her too long to head to the third floor; Hilda had listened to Dumbledore's speech at the opening feast during the start of the year, and had found his mention of the third floor corridor being out of bounds a very peculiar thing. With him mentioning something about that, he might as well place fluorescent lights and coloured flags around it, screaming 'There is something here, come and get it!' It wouldn't take a genius to figure out that if there is a place where the Philosopher's Stone would be hidden, it is in the third floor corridor.

Finally, Hilda arrived to the door that led to the third floor corridor, and quietly dispelled the vampire spell on her that she had cast earlier. Before she could push the slightly ajar door opened however, she literally jumped about a foot in the air when a hand suddenly clamped down on her shoulder. Hilda turned wildly around only to breathe a sigh of relief when she saw that it is Cedric.

"What are you doing here?" Hilda hissed in a whisper.

Cedric frowned. "That's my question!" he hissed back. "I was heading back to my common room from the Transfiguration classroom as I've left my quill there during the exam earlier, and I thought that I saw a strange shadow filtering past the corridors, and decided to follow it. Imagine my surprise when it actually turned out to be you!"

Hilda sighed. "It's a job for the Midnight Society," she explained, and Cedric translated that as 'it is a vampire problem, so butt out'. "Ethan wants me to retrieve something for his old friend which Dumbledore had somehow wheedled it out of."

"What is that object?"



Hilda sighed. "The Philosopher's Stone," she stated, and Cedric's eyes widened. She then sighed. "Look, Cedric. Just head back to your common room! You can't come with me! It's too dangerous! There is also a slight possibility that we'll end up facing the Dark Lord himself!"

"Now that I've heard that, all the more I'm not leaving you behind." Cedric stated firmly. "I'm coming with you, and I won't take no for an answer."

Hilda almost groaned at that. That's what she was afraid of, and that is also the reason why she had told no one of what Ethan had asked her to do, since she is pretty sure that every single one of her friends would insist on going with her, and she can't bring them into more danger than they already are.

"Geez! Fine! Do whatever you wish!" Hilda hissed, throwing both her arms up in exasperation, and Cedric grinned in triumph. "But first, are you good in Defence?"

"I got an Outstanding for all my exams for DADA so far." Cedric stated, and Hilda sighed before pulling on Cedric's arm as the two then entered the slightly ajar doorway that led to the third floor corridor.

Both of them took in a sharp intake of breath when they saw a humongous black three-headed dog almost as large as the entire room itself fast asleep on the ground with an opened trapdoor just in front of its three heads, a golden harp playing nearby. Hilda waved her hand a bit, using some vampire magic to spell the harp to play it for awhile longer.

Cedric chuckled weakly at seeing what they almost have to face. "One of Hagrid's, huh?" he muttered weakly, and Hilda rolled her eyes.

The two teenagers then headed towards the side of the trapdoor and looked down it, seeing nothing but pitch black darkness. Hilda then took up a lone pebble lying by the side of her foot before letting it drop, hearing nothing for awhile before a soft 'thump' reached her sharp ears.

Hilda sighed. "Looks like there is a soft landing of some sort below," she explained for Cedric's benefit as he obviously couldn't hear what she could hear. "But still, I wouldn't put it past the teachers to have another enchantment protection right below us. Roll off whatever you landed on below and head towards the exit. We don't have much time to waste here."

Cedric nodded before slowly sitting down at the edge of the trapdoor. "I'll go first," he stated before he let himself slip over the edge and dropped down below.

The caramel haired teen then felt himself landing on something soft, and when he actually felt something move below him, he took Hilda's words to heart and quickly rolled over the 'soft landing bed' until he felt hard concrete floor beneath his feet. A soft 'thump' reached his ears just then before being followed by the light taps of shoes, and he then knew that Hilda had landed safely as well.

Cedric took out his wand and muttered, "Lumos," beneath his breath, and he paled instantly when he saw what he had just rolled off, and thanked Hilda internally for advising him to roll off whatever he had landed on earlier.

"Devil's Snare." Hilda muttered. "Professor Sprout's, I suppose." She then exchanged looks with Cedric. "Let's go."

Cedric nodded before the two began moving again.

Hilda was getting a tad bit worried as Ethan had warned her of what to expect, and that she had to get the Stone by this night, as there is no time to lose. But what if they ended up facing the Dark Lord himself once they'd reached the Stone? Hilda is confident enough in her abilities to survive an encounter with the Dark Lord as she had vampire blood in her veins after all, but what about Cedric? That is the whole reason why she chose to go alone on this little adventure of hers.

But Cedric just have to follow her, doesn't he?

When Cedric pushed opened the door that allows them to continue on, Hilda found that it actually led onto a long narrow corridor which is eerily dark, and which smelled strongly of mould and what seemed like stale water. The sounds of dripping water droplets

sounded every now and then as the two continued on their trek in silence, with Cedric looking warily around him, the only light visible being from his wand.

Hilda frowned and stopped in her tracks just as the door that led to the next passageway came into view. A strange fluttering noise reached her ears, sounding almost like birds, and judging by the look on Cedric's face, he could hear it too, albeit faintly.

"Birds?" The caramel haired teen uttered, cocking his head to one side in confusion which Hilda found cute. "It sounds like wings or something."

"Let's go."

Hilda pushed open the door, entering the next room, and the two looked around only to see that hundreds of tiny, flapping and glimmering bird-like objects were hovering and flying in the air above their heads. Cedric squinted closer and came to a realisation as to what they really are.

"Keys?" he said in confusion before looking at Hilda who sighed and nodded. "So...one of those must fit that door?" He questioned uneasily, pointing at the door across them.

"Looks like it, but we don't have time to waste here," said Hilda with a sigh, walking across the room to the door, with Cedric following her. "The lock is charmed to be resilient against wizard magic, but fortunately, wizard magic is of no use against vampire magic. That's why so many Aurors were sent against my kind back during the war."

Cedric nodded slowly, having heard about this from his father, and he didn't like hearing about the fact that the Ministry of Magic had conducted a manhunt for the vampires just because their magic are much more powerful than wizard magic. It is almost like a repeat of the time during the civil war era when witches and wizards were hunted down for their magic abilities; only this time, it is the vampires who are in the position of the wizards.

Hilda pressed her left hand against the door and closed her eyes, muttering a spell in a language that Cedric didn't understand beneath her breath. And before Cedric's surprised eyes, he noted

that the silver bangle that Hilda wore around her left wrist glowed blue for a few moments before the runic engravings on it glowed red, and the door then swung opened with a loud creak.

Hilda exchanged looks with Cedric before going on her way, with Cedric following her, eyeing her slightly in awe. He knew, of course, along with nearly every single one of their friends that Hilda is part-vampire and would have some skill in vampire magic, but this is actually the first time that he had seen her using vampire magic.

The two soon came to a dimly lit room with a giant chessboard in the middle of the room, complete with both black and white pieces on the board. Cedric and Hilda then exchanged looks before sighing. "We're going to have to play our way across, aren't we?" Cedric asked in a resigned tone, and Hilda nodded. "I thought so."

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Starlight's Hall  
Diagon Alley

"Take care of the bar, Remus," said Ethan as he pulled on his coat, and Remus nodded. "I will try to get my affairs done as quickly as possible before rushing back. But in the meantime, I'm going to have to trouble you to handle the bar by yourself for one night."

"Don't fret. I'll be alright," said Remus with a smile. "Just go and do what you need to do."

Ethan smiled before nodding and heading out of the bar. And the moment that he had stepped outside the bar, he vanished in a whirl of wind – using the vampires' version of Apparitation.

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"Oh man, that was close." Cedric nearly groaned once they've managed to get past the giant chessboard, his legs feeling wobbly, as three times, he had almost gotten himself killed by one of the knights of the white pieces. He thanked his father mentally for all those chess playing sessions that they have always engaged in during weekends during the school holidays.

"I think that we've almost gotten through all the obstacles now," said Hilda. "We've gotten through Hagrid's, Sprout's, Flitwick's, and the giant chessboard is McGonagall's." She ticked the names off on her fingers. "All that are left are Quirrell and Snape's."

Cedric sighed. "I'm not too concerned about Professor Quirrell's, but Professor Snape's will probably be a nightmare to try to bypass," he grumbled as they approached the door at the end of the passageway.

Hilda frowned as a vaguely familiar smell reached her nostrils the closer that they got to the door, but she simply can't place that smell. Cedric then pushed opened the door, and the smell immediately increased ten-fold and Hilda resisted the urge to gag, and covered her nose with her hand immediately.

One of the setbacks at having hyper sensitive senses are that the bad smells and loud sounds would also be increased ten-fold. Hilda resisted the urge to throw up at the horrible smell that simply wafted up her nostrils and simply forced herself to hold her breath for as long as she could.

Beside her, Cedric almost blanched and looked as if he was about to pass out at the sight of three monstrous-looking gigantic mountain trolls much much larger than the one that they have faced during the Halloween feast lying face-first on the ground, dangerous looking clubs in each of their hands. The pools of blood lying around their heads spoke wonders about the events that must have just transpired in here. That, and the numerous cracks in the ground and walls of this room.

Three goddamn mountain trolls in a fucking school?

This really takes the cake, even if it is for the protection of the Philosopher's Stone! Can't Quirrell come up with something that isn't prone to attacking students on sight, and won't be liable to breaking out of this place anytime soon?

If Cedric wasn't convinced before, then he definitely is now!

Dumbledore must be mad!

Or he is simply barking up the wrong tree.

Hilda nearly paled at that. "Well, at least we didn't have to fight a mountain troll again," she tried to joke with Cedric who only managed a wan smile.

"Come on," said Cedric comfortingly, trying to sound more confident than he really sounds like, leading the way towards the door and pushing it opened.

The new room was a relatively small one with a table on which stood seven bottles all of different sizes, and a fire blocked the way forward. Cedric closed the door behind him, and flames immediately burst out behind him, startling the two considerably.

"What is this?" Cedric asked out loud.

Hilda frowned as she eyed the bottles. "I think I have an idea," she said, walking towards the table, and picking up a piece of parchment that lay on the table before the bottles. Cedric stood by her side as Hilda read the contents of the parchment out loud.

"Danger lies before you, while safety lies behind,  
Two of us will help you, whichever you would find,  
One among us seven will let you move ahead,  
Another will transport the drinker back instead.

Two among our number holds only nettle wine,  
Three of us are killers, waiting hidden in line.

Choose, unless you wish to stay here forevermore,  
To help you in your choice, we give you these clues four;

First, however slyly the poison tries to hide,  
You will always find some on nettle wine's left side.  
Second, different are those who stand at either end,  
But if you would move onward, neither is your friend.  
Third, as you see clearly, all are different sizes,  
Neither dwarf nor giant holds death in their insides.  
Fourth, the second and the second on the right,  
Are twins once you taste them, though different at first sight."

"What is this?" Cedric asked in confusion, furrowing his brows together.

Hilda sighed. "Figures that Uncle Sev would come up with something like this," she muttered beneath her breath. She then met Cedric's curious look. "This isn't magic, Cedric. It's logic." She explained. "Lots of the greatest witches and wizards don't even have an ounce of logic in their bones, and they are often outwitted by several witches and wizards less powerful than them, but had more logic."

"Then...it's impossible for us too, isn't it?" asked Cedric, and Hilda shook her head.

"Not quite," she said. "There is no such thing as impossible. If you just calm down and think things through rationally, we'll be able to see the answer to it." She sighed. "Well, it is really something that Ethan had taught me once."

Hilda then fell silent as she looked at the seven bottles in front of her before looking at the note again, then returning her attention to the bottles before separating them all. Three of the medium-sized bottles stood together, two of the largest bottles stood together, the smallest bottle stood at the right whilst a rounded bottle stood on its own.

Cedric raised a brow at that. "I'm guessing that you have an idea?" he asked, and Hilda nodded.

"Yes, I think that I've figured it out," said Hilda. "The smallest bottle here will allow us to move forwards whilst the rounded bottle will let us go back through where we've just come through." Hilda explained, and Cedric looked at the smallest bottle. Hilda then saw where he is looking and sighed. "It's just enough for two people." She said with a sigh. "If you want to back out, now is your only chance."

"Sorry, no chance of that from happening," said Cedric with a grin, and Hilda sighed.

She then put the parchment down before swallowing the liquid in the smallest bottle before handing it to Cedric who mimicked her actions. It felt like ice was settling into her insides, but Hilda ignored it and approached the flames and stepped through it, being followed by Cedric.

They both came to an open place, and the first thing that both saw was the Mirror of Erised as well as a man wearing a purple turban standing in front of it. Cedric gasped out loud, causing the man to turn around only to reveal himself to be none other than Quirrell.

"Professor Quirrell? Impossible!"

Hilda frowned. "I knew it," she stated.

Quirrell looked startled upon seeing the two before planting a fake smile upon his face. "W-W-What are you two kids d-d-doing here? I-I-It's late, and y-y-you should r-r-really get back to b-b-bed."

"You're here for the Stone, aren't you?" Hilda stated, ignoring Quirrell, and from the slight widening of his eyes, Hilda knew that she had hit the nail on the head. "I knew it. Are you going to hand it to the Dark Lord?"

Quirrell's facial expression changed completely just then before he glared. "I see... So you knew all along. But it's really too bad then. Because now that you've known all this, you are going to have to die!"

But before the once stuttering professor can even take a step towards Hilda, a black blur appeared in between the professor and the two students, catching Quirrell's fist in his hand, and the blur soon revealed itself to be Ethan.

"Ethan!"

Ethan turned towards his ward. "Get the Stone!"

Hilda nodded before running across the room with Cedric close on her heels, skidding to a stop right before the Mirror and running her hands over it, wondering how she is going to get the Stone. The raven haired girl then turned towards Ethan. "Ethan, how do I get the Stone?"

"Blood and Rune Magic." Ethan stated calmly, and Hilda nodded as if that explained matters, which to Hilda, probably did. The older vampire then turned back towards Quirrell. "Looks like I've gotten here just in time. If Voldemort ever get his hands on the Stone, it'll mean instant death for him. Nicholas Flamel is no fool. He is bound



to put protections on the object that is his life work." Ethan narrowed his eyes, and Quirrell took a step backwards in fear. "Let me talk to him face-to-face."

Quirrell was shivering before an unknown voice hissed out. "Enough! Let me speak to him."

The turban wearing man then started to undo the purple turban around his head before he turned around, revealing the face of a man with snake-like eyes and a narrow nose and mouth on the back of Quirrell's head. Cedric who was watching the current happenings went deathly pale and looked as if he would faint at any moment.

One person can only take so many shocks in one day, after all.

"The Dark Lord Voldemort, I presume?" Ethan stated. He then smiled. "We've only met once during the war, but I remember you. You sure did some great things. Terrible, but great."

Voldemort narrowed his eyes at Ethan. "You...you're a vampire?" he questioned. "How did you get in the school without that old fool from knowing?"

"Hogwarts let me in," said Ethan. "She is tired of Dumbledore's manipulations as well." Ethan then called out to Hilda. "Hilda, have you gotten the Stone yet?"

All heads turned towards the raven haired girl just then only to see and hear the girl standing in front of the Mirror with her left hand resting against the Mirror with her eyes closed, muttering a long incantation of an unfamiliar language to all.

"What is she doing?" Voldemort asked in astonishment. "Who is she?"

"My ward." Ethan answered, and Voldemort's eyes widened.

A blue runic circle appeared beneath Hilda's feet just then, and slowly, before everyone's astonished eyes, a blood red stone slowly melted out of the Mirror, and Hilda opened her eyes before reaching out with her right hand to grasp it lightly. The runic circle soon began to disperse into nothingness, and Hilda then stepped away from the

Mirror, turning towards Ethan and showing the Stone. The older vampire then nodded.

"Who are you?"

"No time," said Ethan calmly, approaching Voldemort and Quirrell. "I'm getting you two out of here. I'll explain everything then." He then turned towards the side before scowling. He then turned towards Hilda. "Hilda, get Cedric out of here and to the Forbidden Forest. The unicorns will be waiting. Stay with them for the night before heading back up to the school once dawn breaks. I'll take care of these two."

"Hand this over to Nicholas," said Hilda, tossing the Stone over to Ethan who caught it easily. "I want an answer as well, Ethan."

Ethan nodded before Hilda grasped Cedric by the arm, and both then disappeared in a whirl of winds. The vampire then caught hold of Quirrell's arm, and spoke, facing Voldemort's face. "We'll be leaving as well," he said. He then raised his voice, not speaking to anyone else, but seemingly addressing open air. "Thank you for your help. I'll honour my promise and release you from the bonds that bound you to the current Headmaster of Hogwarts. We'll be leaving now. Please do with this room what you will."

The three then disappeared in a whirl of winds, and not even a moment later, the walls of the room began to shake, and large stones and blocks of stones soon started falling from the walls and ceiling, partially burying the ground with it.

And when Dumbledore came rushing into the room with nearly half of the professors of the school, it is only to find a partially destroyed room along with a destroyed Mirror of Erised. There is no trace of any of the events that had just transpired earlier at all.

Upcoming Stories:

Hilda Evans Snape (Harry Potter)

FemHarry. Hilda Potter never went to the Dursleys at all. Lily Potter had made it quite clear in her will that if anything were to happen to her and her husband, one Severus Snape is to be given custody of her. With use of a blood adoption ritual, Severus Snape soon

became the father of Hilda Potter, and soon became known as Hilda Evans Snape. Hilda is two years older than canon. Charlie/FemHarry

#### A New Name, A Different Life (Harry Potter)

AU FemHarry. Hilda Potter is the much forgotten twin of the famous Boy-Who-Lived. When Remus Lupin and Sirius Black overheard a conversation between the Potter parents and Dumbledore to place Hilda with the Dursleys, they then took it upon themselves to take Hilda away to Lily's distant cousin, Natori Shuuichi, who then decided to raise Hilda as Natori Hikari, his younger sister. HP/Natsume Yuuujinchou crossover. Hikari/Tanuma

#### Silent Symphony (Harry Potter)

FemHarry. When Rowena Ravenclaw witnessed for herself just how the wizarding world was led to doom because of the actions of one Albus Dumbledore which lead to the birth of Lord Voldemort, she forced herself through a cycle of reincarnation and became Hilda Potter. Watch out, world. Rowena Ravenclaw is back. And she isn't happy. Cedric/FemHarry

#### The Will to Protect (Naruto)

FemNaru. With the aftermath of the Akatsuki attack, the Council of Elders and the Fire daimyo, with an overruled voting to select the next Hokage, picked one Namikaze Sayo, the Hokage's right hand and ANBU captain as the Rokudaime Hokage. Shikamaru/FemNaru

#### The Ice Princess of Rikkaidai: Life in America (The Prince of Tennis)

Prequel of TIPoR. Ever wondered what Echizen Rika's life in America is like prior to Rikkaidai? Join the crazy adventures of the St. Andrew's tennis team, and learn just why the team loves their vice-captain so much.

## Chapter Eleven: End of the First Year

Cedric coughed and hacked whilst being forced to his knees as he fought hard to try not to throw up, wondering just how Hilda can use the vampires' form of teleportation all the time without it affecting her like this. Just a short trip like this made him feel almost like he had just been sucked into a whirlpool of some sort and thrown through three typhoons.

"Hey, you alright?" asked Hilda, kneeling down by his side, and putting one hand on his shoulder with concern. "Sorry, I probably should have warned you about this. First time users riding on the teleportation technique of the vampires almost always felt sick. I felt the same way too the first time that I've tried using it."

"Where are we anyway?" asked Cedric, his coughing having subsided some, and he looked around him only to see that they seemed to be in the Forbidden Forest.

"The Forbidden Forest behind the school." Hilda answered, sitting back on her knees and glancing around her at this part of the forest that they were in which seemed like the tree branches were closing them in, and shutting them off from the rest of the forest. "This is the area that I usually go to when I need to help some of the half-humans in the school to allow them to transform in peace."

Cedric nodded slowly, not feeling all that surprised that there are half-humans in the school. He supposed that he should be, as British wizarding law stated that no half-humans are allowed to attend school. But then again, Albus Dumbledore had never followed the law anyway, though Cedric had a feeling that whatever half-humans there are in the school as students, the Headmaster probably didn't even know who they are if Hilda is involved.

"W-What is Ethan going to do with Quirrell and...You-Know—"

"Say the name, Cedric." Hilda interrupted. "It's just a name. Fear of the name only increases fear of the thing itself. Furthermore, I don't think that the reasons Voldemort had for waging the war back then are the reasons that the Ministry had given us."

"R-Right," said Cedric before nervously clearing his throat. "So...what is Ethan going to do with Quirrell and V-Voldemort?"

"I don't know, but Ethan did say something about helping Voldemort," said Hilda with a frown. "I don't really understand why, but Ethan always is perceptive, and he always knew things that he shouldn't know. Jessica had told him something, I guess. She is the High Priestess of the vampire soothsayer clan – someone who can look into the future." Hilda explained, seeing Cedric's confused look. "But probably, Quirrell will probably die."

Cedric stared. "Why?"

Hilda sighed. "Did you see that Voldemort had borrowed Quirrell's body earlier?" she asked, and Cedric nodded. "That meant that he must have lost his own original body, therefore resorting to having to borrow other hosts just to survive. This is Black Magic of the highest order for the wizards, Cedric. I grew up in a vampire clan after all, living among vampires, and I am pretty well versed in Black and Blood Magic, alongside alchemy and several forbidden arts that the wizarding community either frowned upon or had banned. Ethan is a Master at Black and Blood Magic. He trained me in those arts after all. He has a way to create a new body for a mortal like Voldemort – a mere human. But to do so, Voldemort's spirit must separate from Quirrell. But if he did so, Quirrell will die."

Cedric froze.

Hilda sighed. "Well, personally, I think that he kind of deserves it too," she said harshly, and Cedric stared at her in confusion. "Sharing his soul and body with another entity... Not even the vampires will do something like that. I can sense emotions and souls, Cedric. Quirrell is merely greedy. Greedy for power. That's why he jumped at the chance to 'join' with Voldemort when offered the chance. That's how it is. You have to pay a price for power. Everyone knew that."

Cedric fell silent at that.

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The rest of the week passed by in a blur after that.

Draco wasn't pleased with Hilda when he had managed to wheedle it out of her the entire story regarding the Philosopher's Stone, and that she had actually gone after the Stone all by herself with Cedric. Hilda was rather relieved to be free from Draco's nagging after two hours, as the guy could even be worse than Hermione at times.

A lengthy letter from Ethan had come a week after the Philosopher's Stone fiasco as well, explaining everything that Ethan had known about the Stone, and what Jessica and Nicholas Flamel have both told him regarding the Stone as well as the Prophecy.

And that was all.

The vampire clans might never have believed in coddling their children, unlike the wizarding community, but even the vampire clans understood that there are times when they would have to let their young enjoy their freedom and their childhood for a little longer before taking on the adult responsibilities once they're old enough.

Thus, Ethan never told Hilda anything beyond that, only that she'll soon know and understand everything once she comes back home for the summer, and that Sirius and Remus both have asked Ethan to send Hilda their love.

And from what Hilda and Draco have both heard from Severus, Dumbledore wasn't pleased when he had found out that the Stone is gone, and the man is still asking every single portrait and statue in the school if they have seen anyone suspicious in the school on that fateful night.

Hilda wanted to groan at that when she had heard that piece of information from Severus.

I mean, come on!

It is true that Dumbledore is the Headmaster of Hogwarts, but all the portraits and statues in the school, along with all the ghosts, are all duty-bound to serve Hogwarts itself first, with the Headmaster second. Not even Peeves, the school's resident poltergeist is exempted from that rule.

And if Hogwarts is protecting Ethan and the current whereabouts of the Stone, and the events that had just transpired down the trapdoor,

then Dumbledore would never find out about Ethan, not even if he had turned the entire school upside-down.

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"I see," said Nicholas Flamel with a sigh after Ethan had travelled through two mountains and one ravine just to get to the famous alchemist's house after having teleported as near as he could to Nicholas' current location. Not even a vampire could bypass the wards that Nicholas had put up around his house for nearly fifty miles in every single direction to discourage any pursuers seeking the Stone, as Nicholas had used Blood and Rune Magic to put up those wards.

"I've given it to Jessica, and she said that she'll take care of the Stone," said Ethan solemnly, eyeing his old friend who suddenly seemed to have aged fifty years. It is true that Nicholas Flamel is over six hundred years old at this point in time, but you get what I mean. "She's one of those that I'll trust with my life, so you can trust her. She's the High Priestess of the Falsoss clan, and she's pretty much a mistress in Black Magic, so she'll be able to do something about the Stone."

The two are currently seated at the table in Nicholas Flamel's sitting room where only an oil lamp is the only light available. Nicholas' wife is currently asleep in their bedroom, and now that Ethan thinks about it, the couple seemed to have been sleeping a lot lately ever since Nicholas had given his precious Philosopher's Stone away to that old goat otherwise known as Albus Dumbledore.

"Thank you, Ethan," said Nicholas gratefully. "You've delivered what you've promised. Now, I can rest easy, knowing that no one would ever get their hands on the Stone again." He sighed. "I should never have made the Stone."

"It wasn't your fault," said Ethan comfortingly. "You were young then. And all young people are stupid and foolish in a way. So were you at that time."

"It has been so long..." Nicholas muttered, curling his fingers together on the tabletop. "Too long... After over six hundred years, I can finally rest now."

"Nick..."

Nicholas then sighed before taking a dark red leather covered thick tome from out of nowhere before handing it to a bewildered looking Ethan. "Take that and give it to Hilda," he said simply. "In that was written all the results of my life work, and all my research, along with Penny's. I owe Hilda for retrieving the Stone for me. And even if she didn't, I would have given that to her anyway. Most of what I knew about alchemy and Blood Magic is written in there. If it's someone like her, she wouldn't use the contents of the book for evil."

Ethan smiled and nodded. "Alright. I'll give it to her," he said. "But I've been wondering for some time now, Nick." He frowned slightly. "Just who told you how to create the Philosopher's Stone? I know that I wasn't even born at that time when you've created the Stone, but even I know enough that the Philosopher's Stone is also considered a legend even back then. Just how did you get the recipe to create it?"

"Oh. That." Nicholas muttered. "Someone gave me the recipe for it when I was researching on the Elixir of Life when I was a young man."

"Who?" asked Ethan with a frown. Even the vampires of that era had no idea how to create the legendary Elixir of Life, and they are the ones with the longest life-spans in the world, being one of the Immortals, alongside the elves and faeries.

"Thinking back on it, that man seems to be a vampire as well," said Nicholas with a frown. "He seems to be a pretty young one, as the vampire aura that all vampires had – even Hilda, wasn't as strong with him. He gave me the recipe and asked for nothing in return."

Ethan frowned. "What's his name?" he asked sharply.

"Orlando."

Ethan's eyes widened a slight fraction in horror.

XXXXXX

Can you spell 'tense' here?



Moments ticked by as Ethan and Voldemort, now in spirit form again after leaving Quirrell's body, stared at each other in the woods just behind Knockturn Alley, with neither one of the two speaking a single word after Ethan had told Voldemort everything about the fake prophecy that Jessica and Nicholas have both told him about, and also about Hilda's true identity after that.

Voldemort finally sighed. "Great, I've been a fool," he muttered. "And what do you want me to do? Without a body, even I can't do much. And I know the abilities and powers of the vampires well enough to know that there are a few of you who can kill me even when I'm in spirit form."

Ethan sighed at that statement, his mind working furiously. He had talked over his plan regarding Voldemort with Sirius and Remus, as well as his father and brother when he had made a side-trip back to the Dark Forest from visiting Nicholas for the last time. All four weren't exactly that thrilled with his plan, especially the former two, but they all agreed that an additional ally against Dumbledore isn't necessarily a bad thing.

"If I give you a body, will you swear that you won't hurt Hilda?" Ethan asked blandly, and Voldemort can only stare at him. "I could care less if you kill Dumbledore, but I just want your word that you won't hurt Hilda."

Ethan stared straight at Voldemort unblinkingly with those crimson orbs of his as he said that, even making the Dark Lord nervous. Ethan knew that a wizard's word and vow is extremely important to them, and they can't break it, hence the reason why Ethan had insisted that Voldemort swear that he wouldn't hurt Hilda.

"I'm a man of my word, Mr Nightwing—"

"Ethan will be fine." Ethan interrupted. "I don't like your wizard customs."

"Fine. Ethan then," said Voldemort. "Like I was saying, since the prophecy is fake, and she poses no threat to me, I had no intention to harm her, though it isn't like it will succeed anyway even if I tried. I know how vampires are, especially when it comes to protecting their young. And if you help me out, I will give you my word that neither I nor my subordinates will harm you or your family, not that we can do

it anyway." Voldemort sighed. "I recognise that crest that you're wearing." He pointed out the silver chain hanging around Ethan's neck which had a pendant in the shape of a square with two feather-like symbols sticking from the back of it. "That's the crest of the ruling vampire clan of the east – the Nightwing clan. You're the son of High Lord Elton, aren't you?"

"You knew my father?"

"Not personally." Voldemort corrected. "I've heard about him during the war when some of the vampires got involved in our dispute when the Ministry ordered their Aurors to hunt down the 'dark creatures', regardless even if they were supporting me, something that I find stupid. I didn't like the idea that they're staying neutral in the war back then, but I was young and stupid then. But still, I can't force them to do something that they can't, and I respected their wishes. The least that the stupid Ministry can do after having practically created several laws that had all but ousted them from the wizarding world is to at least leave them in peace." He sighed. "High Lord Elton is rather famous among the Midnight Society and even my own band of followers. He's the only vampire in existence to cause Dumbledore to run almost like a pack of Dementors are after him during the last war."

"Yeah, I've heard of that from my brother." Ethan sighed. "Our kind has never been all that fond of the Light as we were hunted down by them for far too long, and neither is Hilda for that matter. She grew up with the vampires, and knew our ways better than anyone else. Technically, she is one of us, as she has the blood of the Nightwing clan flowing through her veins. Once she reaches the age of sixteen, the age of adulthood for the vampires, Hilda is going to have to make a choice: she has to choose whether to live the life of a vampire or a human. That's the choice that all part vampires and even humans who were blood adopted by vampires have to make. Hilda is no exception."

"And what do you think that she will choose?" Voldemort asked carefully. This is actually the first that he had actually heard of a vampire clan blood adopting a human, especially a member of the wizarding community.

"Personally? I think that Hilda will choose the path of the night," said Ethan with a sigh. "It is true that I would wish for her to choose us as

well, and I know that my father, brother and Jessica wishes for the same thing, but even they didn't want to force her to choose between them and the life that she ought to have led. But I seriously think that Hilda will choose the path of the night. She is never a fan of the Light after Dumbledore had ordered Eve killed several years ago."

"Eve?"

"My cousin. And Hilda's first friend." Ethan answered. "Eve is also the princess of the ruling vampire clan of the north. You can imagine that Hilda didn't take Eve's death too well. Before, she is rather neutral towards the Light, but after that, she started to develop an intense dislike for them. This is another reason why she had never tolerated Dumbledore's spies entering our bar, and took pleasure in throwing them out. Head first."

Voldemort snorted. "That old man is going senile," he decided. "He's lost his precious 'weapon' when he ordered a vampire princess killed. What goes around comes around indeed." He then looked at Ethan. "And how do you plan on giving me a body? I've never heard of anything like that before."

"You wouldn't, since it's an ancient ritual of the highest order that only the ruling vampire clans knew," said Ethan. "The ritual is a mix of ancient Blood Magic, Rune Magic and Black Magic. It's an ancient ritual that the vampires actually used in order to bring back one of our own if they ever lost their body." He then sighed. "I won't lie to you. It's going to be very painful to go through the ritual. Probably even more than what you've ever experienced before in your entire life. It'll bring back your entire soul bit by bit, fragment by fragment, before a body is created."

"My soul...is split."

"I see," said Ethan with a sigh. "I thought so. The darkest form of immortality for you wizards, isn't it? Horcuxes, right? I suspected it a little just after the war, as even though technically, you've died, your soul is still intact. Just how many did you make? The higher the number, the more pain that is involved."

"Seven."

"Seven?" Ethan echoed in bewilderment. He then shook his head. "Dear Lilith...you sure don't do things halfway, do you? Seven is the magic number, and it practically ensured that you'll be immortal for life, no matter what is done to you. Or at least, as immortal as you wizards would like to believe. And because you've split your soul seven times, the pain when your soul joins together into your new body will be unbearable. This ritual will fix the damage done to your soul as well. You won't be able to create any more Horcuxes without actually killing yourself in the future."

"I understand," said Voldemort with a nod.

Ethan sighed. "I'll have to enlist Jessica's help for this as she is the one who is the master in rituals like this, not me," he stated. "You'll probably be walking among the living again once Hilda returns home for the summer holidays."

XXXXXX

The exam results that were given to every Hogwarts' student two days before they're due back home for the summer holidays had pleased Hilda greatly when she had received hers. She had topped all classes, and much to her surprise, she had actually become top student for the first year.

Much to Hilda's surprise, Hermione wasn't jealous at all. In fact, the bushy haired girl had actually laughed and had said something about having a feeling that the results will be this way, since she had been the one always asking Hilda hundred questions during exam week, along with every other.

Hilda had topped DADA, Potions, Charms and Astronomy, since the former three lessons are the ones that Ethan and Severus have both covered the most for her and Draco when they were both little, and Astronomy is a natural thing for her as vampire culture often covered the reading of the stars. History, Transfiguration and Herbology, she had tied with Hermione. Jasper and Cedric have done extremely well for their examinations, even beating some of the Ravenclaws in examinations which had pleased them both. Draco, Blaise and Neville have passed all their subjects, with Neville having topped Herbology which is easily his best subject, with Potions being his worst, with the boy being a walking bundle of nerves during their Potions' examination.

And there is something about Neville that Hilda had missed as well, as Professor Flitwick had called her into his office when she'd received her examination results, with the tiny professor congratulating her for having come in as top student, having the highest scores that a student can reach in all of Hogwarts' history.

Apparently, Blaise and Draco were both extremely tired of having to see Neville walk on eggshells around Gryffindor House, particularly around the Weasel and his lapdogs, and even Jasper and Cedric weren't pleased with his treatment in Gryffindor House. The Hufflepuff first years weren't pleased either, as they are a loyal bunch, and there has been more than once when Justin Finch-Fletchley and Ernie Macmillan have actually all but pushed Neville into their dormitory for him to spend the night just so that he wouldn't have to return to his own dormitory, especially after the two have heard the full story from Hilda who also happened to be a good friend of theirs after having assisted them, along with most of the Hufflepuff first years in their studies during examination week.

It actually came to such a point that Neville had hardly ever slept in his dormitory in Gryffindor House, as he actually spend the nights in either the dormitories of Hufflepuff or Slytherin. The individual Heads of Houses have no problems with it as long as Professor McGonagall agrees which she does, seeing as how she is well aware of the bullying problem, but could do nothing about it. Neville's grandmother wasn't all that pleased either when she had heard the full story from Neville during the holidays, but as she wasn't all that fond of the Weasley family herself, she can do nothing as well.

Hilda actually had to ask the Weasley twins to sneak all of Neville's things out of his dormitory and into the Hufflepuff Tower for safekeeping, especially after the books destroying incident, something which Fred and George were more than happy to do.

And as such, because of all the bullying, Blaise, Draco and Hermione have all but dragged Neville to Professor McGonagall's office to have him resorted because of some dumb school rule that only allows a student to be resorted at the end of the school year. The usually stern witch seemed to be waiting for them, and had promptly placed the Sorting Hat on Neville's head after Draco had all but sat a protesting Neville in front of her. It didn't take the Sorting

Hat longer than five minutes before it had shouted out "HUFFLEPUFF!", and that ends the matter.

Hilda was still laughing about the way that Draco, Blaise and Hermione have managed to get Neville resorted on the train ride home, much to the once shy boy's embarrassment.

"At least you don't have to worry about having your stuff destroyed by Weasley and his sidekicks next year, Neville," said Hilda once she had managed to stop laughing long enough to get her words out.

"Yeah, I guess," said Neville with a smile. "Gran will be happy about this...I hope. My mother was in Hufflepuff when she was in school." He muttered.

Hilda said nothing about that as she knew the story about Neville's parents and decided to change the topic before someone asks Neville about his parents, something that she is fairly sure that Neville wouldn't want to discuss.

"Before I forget, Cedric, Ethan has a proposition for you," said Hilda, turning towards the older boy who currently had his face hidden behind some book.

"Huh?" Cedric blinked in confusion from his seat in between Neville and Jasper, with Blaise seated beside Jasper, and with Hilda, Hermione and Draco sitting opposite them.

"Ethan asked me to talk to you about this in his last letter." Hilda explained. "If Mr and Mrs Diggory agree, then Ethan would like to offer you a part-time job at Starlight's Hall. You were a great help to us during that time when Ethan was taken ill, and we were always shorthanded there anyway, even with Remus and Sirius' help. What do you think? The pay isn't exactly that great either, but we'll really appreciate your help there. Draco often pops by to help us out as well, so you needn't worry about not knowing anything. You'll soon learn."

"W-Well..." Cedric stammered, seeing every single pair of eyes in the carriage on him. "I can talk to my parents about this. If they don't mind, which I'm fairly sure that they wouldn't, then I'll probably accept Ethan's proposition."

The train pulled in at King's Cross Station just then, and Hilda grinned as all of them stood up to get their stuff. "Great! I'll talk to Ethan about this," she said before reaching for her trunk, only to have Cedric taking it down from the rack for her. "I'll see you guys this summer?"

"Naturally," said Hermione with a nod. "I'll come and visit you often, now that I know my way around Diagon Alley and Knockturn Alley. I'll come with Jasper and Blaise or something, so that you wouldn't need to rescue me again, Hilda." She joked, talking about the time when she had first met Hilda, and the dark haired girl smiled.

"Yeah, I guess," she said.

"We should get going," said Jasper with a smile. "Our families are probably tired of waiting for us."

Ethan and Sirius were both present at the platform – both who were talking with Cedric's parents, alongside Lucius and Narcissa. Hilda, Draco and Cedric waved goodbye to their friends before heading towards where their respective parents and guardians were, with Hermione, Blaise and Jasper promising to write to each other during the summer, and to meet up to buy their school supplies the next year, even that they'll come to Starlight's Hall often during the holidays.

"Hilda, welcome home!" said Sirius before he swung Hilda up into the air, since the girl is still small enough for Sirius to carry, though she had already grown several inches during the past year, and had even gained a little weight. "And you've grown a little heavier."

"I did not!" Hilda protested, and Ethan laughed, with the Diggory and Malfoy families watching this scene with amusement.

"What, no hug for me?" asked Ethan in mock disappointment, and Hilda laughed before hugging Ethan loosely around the waist. "Welcome home, Hilda. Jessica and Remus both miss you. And so did all the house elves. And most, if not all of our customers too, I'm sure." Ethan smiled down at her. "Let's go home."

Pairings: Cedric/Hilda, Possible Hermione/Jasper

Warnings: Dumbledore bashing, Weasley bashing save for Bill, Charlie and the twins, siding with Voldemort-fic

Disclaimer: I do not own Harry Potter and any of the characters, but the OC characters belongs to me

Chapter Twelve: Nursing Voldemort?

Starlight's Hall  
Knockturn Alley

Mornings are as slow as always for the occupants of the Starlight's Hall bar as the house elves went about cleaning up the place for them to open for business, with nearly three-quarters of the guests who have stayed in the inn rooms not even up yet, as dawn had just broken not long ago.

And one Ethan Nightwing was slowly cleaning an empty wine glass with a damp cloth, tuning out Lyra who was squeaking out orders to the other house elves to hurry with their cleaning. The bell tinkled somewhere in the bar just then, and Ethan glanced up.

"My apologies, but we're not opened yet—"

"Ethan."

Ethan blinked as two figures stepped in through the doorway, with the door swinging shut behind them. The taller figure is a handsome red-haired man with his hair done in a ponytail, with a fang earring hanging from his left ear. He was also dressed in a black shirt with leather pants and black boots with a long black trench coat over it. The man had a hand on the shoulder of a young blonde girl who doesn't seem to be older than eleven or so.

Ethan smiled at the redhead. "Well now, look what the cat had dragged in," he said with a smile at his old friend. "What brings you here, Bill?"

Bill Weasley grinned at his old friend before taking a seat at the bar counter in front of Ethan, giving the blonde girl with him a slight nudge before she did the same. "I need a favour, Ethan," he said



seriously, and Ethan nodded. "This is Luna Lovegood, Xenophilius Lovegood's daughter. I need you to take her in."

Ethan blinked in confusion. "Huh?"

Bill sighed. "You know that the wife of Xenophilius Lovegood died years ago in a freak accident, don't you?" he questioned, and Ethan nodded slowly. "Well, ever since then, he had been drinking heavily and hitting Luna, even depriving her of her meals. Fred and George often have to sneak food out for her, or she'll starve otherwise. This can't go on, Ethan. And when I've returned to Britain from Egypt, I found Luna hiding behind a tree at the hill near the Lovegood house. From the looks of it, her father had been hitting her again. I need someone to take her in, and to protect her from her father, and to prevent her from being sent back there again."

"Bill, you know my situation, and that I can't take a human in!" Ethan said with a sigh. "Eric would skin me alive if I do so! He almost threw a fit the last time I took Hilda with me." He studied the blonde girl next to Bill, and his eyes softened. "What about the Longbottom family?" He asked, turning towards Bill. "Augusta Longbottom should be able to take her in, and the Longbottom family is a pretty old and powerful family. Her influence should be enough to protect her."

"Er...well...I can try asking her." Bill muttered, wondering why he had never thought of Augusta before. He then glanced around before turning back towards Ethan. "Where's Hilda? Still asleep?"

"No," said Ethan with a quick shake of his head. "She's nursing Voldemort."

Bill nearly choked on his spit. "Say what?"

In a room on the second level of the inn, where the bedrooms of the owners of Starlight's Hall were located, was where one can find Hilda Evans currently nursing the most feared wizard of the last century who was...currently sick to his stomach and puking his guts out for a week straight ever since Ethan had performed the ritual to give him back his body.

Voldemort now looked like how he had looked like when he was sixteen, which he was glad for, as he liked looking that way, thought

thankfully, he still retained his magic ability and spell work. And damn. When Ethan had said that the ritual hurts, he definitely didn't expect for it to hurt like an awful bitch! He had practically shrieked like a girl for an hour straight when Ethan and that Jessica vampire had helped with the ritual. And much to his displeasure, he had to go by his own real name if he doesn't want to invite any suspicions to himself.

Hilda Evans had been nursing him ever since he was bedridden, something which he was curious of. Ethan had popped by a few times, but as he had a business to run, he couldn't stay too long. Severus had often come by with potions to help with his sickness, as Ethan had said that his new body must expel all foreign substances before it can function properly, and that means he will be bedridden for at least another week or so.

Hilda said nothing like what she had been doing for the past few days as she changed the wash towel on his forehead, wringing the water out before placing it back on his forehead, placing one hand on his chest where the pyjamas that Sirius Black had helped changed him in a few days ago had the top three buttons unbuttoned, exposing his chest. A soft greenish-blue glow surrounded Hilda's hand before Voldemort instantly felt better, and didn't feel like puking his guts up again.

If truth be told, Voldemort was thankful for her silence, as he didn't know what to say either. Until just a few days ago, he had wanted to kill this girl in front of him more than anything else, and suddenly, she had become his personal nurse, and made it a point to make him as comfortable as possible. From changing his pyjamas to cleaning him, to easing his discomfort, and to feeding him fluids as he couldn't eat solid food yet, Hilda did it all without complaint.

In fact, Sirius Black and Remus Lupin have both cornered him two days ago when Hilda had gone to the bathroom for a quick toilet break, and they have threatened him that if he so much as touch one hair on Hilda's head, they'll kill him themselves. And that caramel haired teenager who often visited Hilda whilst in here seemed a tad bit wary of him, but seemed willing to accept him if Hilda does.

Voldemort suddenly felt bile rising up in his throat, and before he can say anything, a bucket was suddenly held below his nose as

Hilda helped him to sit up wordlessly, and he puked his guts out into the bucket. It had been this way for the past several days. He doesn't even have to say anything; Hilda will always know what he needs. And Voldemort still doesn't know how she knew.

"Why?" Voldemort rasped out as he lay back in bed, his stomach groaning at the abuse done for his puking out for the fifth time for the past two days. Hilda raised an eyebrow as a house elf popped in with a loud crack before taking the bucket, leaving behind a clean bucket in its place, before Disapparating again. "Why did you help me? Why are you helping me? I've heard about it from Ethan. I killed your parents. You should be hating me, not helping me."

Hilda turned towards him before sighing. "It might sound a little strange to you, but I've never blamed you for their deaths," she said solemnly, speaking for the first time in Voldemort's presence. "Not even once." Her blue-red eyes were almost mesmerising to Voldemort, almost hypnotising, yet it was unlike Ethan's own red eyes. "True, it's a fact that you did indeed kill them even if you were tricked by Dumbledore and Sybil Trelawney. But it makes no difference to me whether they were killed by you or on the battlefield itself. It was wartime back then. People die during war. It's a fact. Can you name me one war where no one had died?"

Voldemort was speechless at that. "Well..."

"Exactly," said Hilda. "It makes no sense to hate you for something that is extremely common during wartime. Furthermore, I'm no longer Hilda Potter. I've already ceased to be her the moment that Ethan did the blood ritual six years ago to blood adopt me into the Nightwing clan. It might sound cruel, but I've never thought of Lily and James Potter as my parents. They might have sired me, but it is difficult to love someone whom you have never met, do you?"

Voldemort was silent for several moments before he chuckled.

"Something funny?"

"For a child, you have the mindset of an adult," said Voldemort. "I can see why the ruling vampire clan of the east is so fond of you, and why Ethan is so protective over you. Jessica Falsoss threatened me after the ritual as well that if I should so much as touch one hair on your head, she'll make me disappear. What a difference. For a

long time, I thought that you're the one who will be my demise, but all the time, it has been my old teacher who is pulling the strings behind the scenes, and he is the one who will be my demise." Voldemort smirked. "Funny. Dumbledore has hunted high and low for you for six years, but he didn't realise that you were all the time under his nose, only under a different name."

Hilda smiled, imagining the look on Dumbledore's face once he realises who she is. "I'll love to see his face once he realises who I am," she said, and Voldemort stifled a chuckle. "And this may not be my place to say, but once you're well enough, you'd better send for someone to break your subordinates out of Azkaban. They wouldn't last long if they're kept in there for another year. Their minds are about to give way."

"Who?"

"Bellatrix Lestrange. Her husband, Rodolphus, and her brother Rabastan." Hilda answered. "My vampire ability is Omniscience. It is something that I got from the blood ritual, and it means that I can see the past, present and future. That's how I knew about them." Hilda then stood up, taking the basin with her. "Have a good rest. I'll be back in the evening with some food."

The door closed behind her, and Voldemort leant back into his pillows with a small smile on his lips. 'She's...truly interesting.'

XXXXXX

"Sorry that I'm late!" Cedric apologised, half-stumbling into Starlight's Hall with a bit of a toast in his mouth. "Mom made me—"

"Just calm down a little," said Hilda with a light chuckle, pulling him into the kitchen with her. "Mornings are always slow for us. And I need to ask you something anyway."

Voldemort had managed to get back on his feet two days ago, and he had been exploring Knockturn Alley and Diagon Alley ever since, much to Ethan's relief, as he had been running ragged ever since Hilda was stuck babysitting Voldemort, even with Sirius, Remus and Cedric's help. Ethan had wondered once what the people's reactions would be if they have realised that it is Lord Voldemort who is roaming about in front of them.

"Like what?" Cedric asked, after taking the toast out of his mouth.

"It's Ritual Night tonight," said Hilda. "It's the night when the immortal souls of the world would be put to rest, and where all of the Midnight Society would attend." She smiled at him. "Do you want to come?"

XXXXXX

The setting for Ritual Night is similar to what was set up on Samhain Night – with the usual perimeters, rings, fires, and everything.

Cedric stared on in wonder as some people were setting up the setting – and they're definitely not human. He had seen a few whom he could sworn were elves, and he had already seen Ethan speaking with two men that looks a lot like him which Draco had whispered awhile back were his elder brother and father – the High Prince and High Lord of the Nightwing clan.

Hilda is currently busy helping a few women dressed in black robes and silver cloaks – one of which Cedric recognised as a high class Rune Mistress judging by the cloak – and they're busy setting up some kind of runic circle.

And much to Cedric's horror, he saw one 'Tom Riddle' present alongside his Potions Master at school, and Draco's father, along with the blonde himself.

"Enjoying the sights?" said a voice, and Cedric turned only to see Hilda behind him.

"Hilda!"

Hilda smiled. She then sighed and cricked her neck, rolling her head slowly from side to side, getting the kinks out of her neck. "Man, setting up the runes is a pain in the ass," she complained. ("HILDA! Language!" A shriek from Ethan sounded, amidst the titters of amusement from his brother and father.) "And then again, I am one of the few that knew how to do that."

"I'm seeing you taking Ancient Runes in third year, Hilda," said Cedric with a grin.

"Funny how you said that, considering you failed and dropped Divination at the end of last year," said Hilda, and Cedric squawked.

"HILDA!" A black blur appeared beside Hilda just then, that of a very handsome boy with black hair and silver eyes, looking like a noble of some sort, and Cedric guessed that he must be a vampire as well. "I was hoping that you'll be here!"

A smile broke out on Hilda's face just then. "Alec! It's been a while, hasn't it? You look well. Nightshades treating you well?"

"Of course," said Alec with a smile. "I wished that you and Drake could have attended Nightshades with me, but..." He then sighed. "Is Drake around here?"

"Yeah. He's with his dad," said Hilda. She then turned towards Cedric. "Cedric, this is Alec Silverstein." She introduced. "Alec, this is Cedric Diggory. He's a friend from school. And as you might have guessed, Cedric, Alec is a vampire—"

"Hilda! We need your help over here!" A woman shouted to Hilda from the rune site.

Hilda sighed. "What is it this time?" she asked, annoyed, as she walked over to them.

Alec smiled at Cedric before bowing and excusing himself. "Excuse me. But I'd better help as well."

Cedric glared at Alec's departing back with jealousy in his eyes. "Hey Cedric." Cedric turned furious looking eyes onto Draco who winced. "What did I do?" he asked, bewildered.

"Huh? Oh. Sorry. It's not you." Cedric mumbled. "Who's that guy?" He asked, jerking his chin towards Alec's direction.

"Hmm?" Draco turned towards the direction that Cedric was pointing, and his face brightened up. "Alec! I was hoping that he'll be here!" He turned back towards Cedric. "That's Alec Silverstein. He's the High Prince of the ruling clan of the north – the warrior clan. He grew up with Hilda and me, and we often spent time together. But when we reached school age, Alec attended Nightshades, a school

attended by races of all kinds, whilst Hilda and I attended Hogwarts."

"Nightshades?"

"It's located in one of the vampire lands in the northern mountains." Draco explained. "Vampires, elves, werewolves, and other non-humans attend that school, not only humans alone. They taught Dark Arts and Black Magic there, and the Ministry has no say over what was taught there. Hilda and I initially wanted to attend Nightshades with Alec, but Dad and Ethan said no." Draco then grinned, seeing that look in Cedric's eyes. Well, no one said not to have some fun with Cedric. "And even when we're little, Hilda had always been close with Alec. Both their families are good friends and allies for generations after all. And I think High Lord Elton is talking of an arranged marriage..."

Draco could have burst out laughing at the look on Cedric's face. Poor Alec might have to deal with a very pissed off and jealous wizard during the Ritual Night, but hey, let a guy have his fun.

Meanwhile, over with Alec, the mentioned vampire shivered. Somehow, he had a feeling that he had just been dragged into someone's plot...

## Chapter Thirteen: Gilderoy Lockhart

Cedric was in a foul mood for a week after that, much to Draco's amusement.

Ethan had actually remarked to Voldemort, Severus and Lucius after that that if he put Cedric next to a rampaging werewolf on a full moon night, no one would be able to tell the differences between the both of them.

As for Hilda, she was wondering out loud to Draco one day when the both of them were preparing the usual weekly batch of Calming Draughts in the back room of the inn, just what had pissed Cedric off so much that he is acting so much like a woman on PMS.

Draco was sniggering away after that. And with owl calls to their friends – Hermione, Jasper, Neville and Padma, they were all in the joke as well, and Padma who had been staying with Hermione ever since the second week of holiday because of her twin, the two girls were giggling away at the thought of Draco's 'prank' on Hilda. He truly is a Slytherin.

And it didn't help matters that Alec Silverstein had stayed with Hilda and Ethan at the bar for a week as Alec's father had some dealings with Elton Nightwing at the Dark Castle. Draco had taken Alec aside after the Ritual Night, and had explained things to him, since the vampire had his own suspicions that Cedric had liked Hilda. As a vampire, he can smell the hormones in the air, and could even sense emotions. Hilda, his friend being as dense as she was, couldn't even see that Cedric had liked her even though everyone could see it coming from a mile away!

Neville had also owled Hilda, informing her with much excitement in his letter that he had a new sister, as Bill Weasley had paid his grandmother a visit a few weeks ago, with a young blonde girl with him that Neville had recognised instantly as Luna Lovegood thanks to his status as the heir of the Longbottom House.

He didn't know what went on between Bill and his grandmother, but after that, Augusta Longbottom had summoned Neville and had informed him that Luna has some very serious problems at home, and Bill had brought Luna to her so that she can protect the young girl. Augusta had thus activated her status as the Head of the



Longbottom House and had adopted the young girl with the use of a blood ritual.

Thus, Luna Lovegood is now known as Luna Lovegood-Longbottom that is quite a mouthful to speak, and Neville is also pleased to have a younger sister, having been an only child all this time. Though he could do without the weird things that his sister says half the time...

Augusta had been rather amused about that when Neville had complained that he couldn't understand half the things that Luna had told him. The young boy had suspected however, that Luna is a Seer, as she sometimes speaks as if she knew the future, sometimes like how Hilda speaks at times. Everyone within their little circle knew that Hilda had the ability of Omniscience – it means that she can see the future, present and the past, though she doesn't utilise this ability often. The dark haired girl had often hid from Dumbledore and the crazy Divination teacher at Hogwarts because of this as a result.

When Dumbledore had heard about Augusta adopting Luna, he was far from pleased, and had actually gone to the Ministry to confront the witch when she was there signing the adoption papers with Amelia Bones and Amos Diggory as her witnesses to make things official, with Lucius Malfoy finalising things so that no one can take Luna away from Augusta, as even the old witch had grown fond of Luna's company, with Augusta always having wanted a granddaughter.

From what Hilda had heard from Cedric and Draco, a shouting match had escalated between Dumbledore and Augusta both that could be heard all over the Ministry. Amelia Bones actually have to physically restrain Augusta so that she doesn't hex Dumbledore and get sentenced to Azkaban for that, as the old headmaster is highly influential in the wizarding community after all.

Hilda had also received letters from Neville, Hermione, Padma and Jasper about two weeks before the start of the new school term, with all of them arranging to meet up together so that they can buy their supplies for the next school year. All her friends have arranged to meet up at Starlight's Hall before going together to Diagon Alley.

And as such, it is on a Friday afternoon that all seven teenagers were walking together to Starlight's Hall after meeting up at the Leaky Cauldron after either Flooing there or taking the Knight Bus.

Neville had met up with both Jasper and Cedric beforehand as they both lived near the Longbottom Manor, and the three of them, along with Luna, have taken the Knight Bus there. At the end of the ride, all four were very relieved to get off the bus, with Luna muttering something about the driver having a case of 'Mugwort Sprocks' or something like that to drive that recklessly. Neville had stopped listening to Luna after that.

Jasper was actually quite convinced that the ground was still shaking even as they got off the Knight Bus at the entrance of the Leaky Cauldron, and all four have decided quite firmly, even Luna, that they never ever wanted to ride the Knight Bus again.

There were several witches and wizards in dark cloaks in Knockturn Alley even as they walked towards Starlight's Hall, and Hermione could have sworn that a few were non-humans, but she paid them no heed. Several of them seemed to recognise Draco and Cedric, as they nodded to them politely before going on their way.

Apparently, Hilda and Ethan holds much influence in Knockturn Alley.

Starlight's Hall soon came into view, and so were several muttered cursing and well-chosen swear words from a petite dark-haired figure wearing some Muggle clothing of a long-sleeved white shirt with a black tee-shirt over it, along with black jeans and dark blue and white sneakers on her feet, with a black choker from which a silver pendant of the symbol of the northern vampire clan of the east hung from.

All her friends could only stare, bewildered, as Hilda cursed several well-chosen swear words beneath her breath as she rubbed furiously at some graffiti on the walls of Starlight's Hall with a cloth in hand, with several other cloths and mops doing the same on the other parts of the wall.

Hermione's eyebrow rose as she saw several graffiti words scrawled on the walls, with words like 'abominations', 'freaks', 'bloodsuckers', 'get out', among several other words scrawled on the wall. There

was also what seemed to be paint sprawled on the ground and on the walls. Several passing Knockturn Alley citizens saw what was written on the walls, and a few even scowled in anger.

"Uh oh. Hilda doesn't look happy." Jasper muttered.

"You think?" Cedric questioned sarcastically. He then glanced at the graffiti, a frown on his face. Hilda had mentioned once about their problems with the people of Diagon Alley, but she had never mentioned that it was this bad.

"Freaks, are we?" Hilda muttered dangerously, increasing her rubbing strength on the graffiti, getting it out faster. "I swear... Once I get my hands on them, they'll find themselves losing a very important part of their male anatomy!"

All boys present turned rather green at that, and Jasper actually covered his crotch protectively with one hand.

Padma giggled. "Hilda!" she called out, waving to Hilda, the dark haired girl who had turned around in surprise at the sound of her name, and the scowl on her face immediately turned to that of a smile as she waved back at them with the rag in her hand still.

"Hey guys!" Hilda greeted as they approached her, the rag clenched in her left hand as she turned around to face them. "You're early. We arranged to meet at ten, didn't we?" She questioned as she took a peek at her watch.

"Nah, we thought that we should come early," said Hermione with a smile. "Neville wanted to show Luna around as well as introduce the rest of us to her, and we thought that we should come early just in case the bar is tied up with work."

"I see," said Hilda with a smile. She then nodded politely to Luna who nodded politely back, a look of admiration in the younger girl's eyes, as Hilda had been the one to help Luna, and also to make sure that she had been fattened up considerably when Ethan had housed Luna temporarily whilst Augusta Longbottom was overseeing the adoption finalisation.

"Hilda, those graffiti..." Neville trailed off, frowning as he glanced at the graffiti on the walls.

Hilda's face fell slightly as she glanced back over her shoulder before turning back towards her friends. "Oh. Don't worry about it," she said. "It isn't the first time that this had happened, unfortunately. We had wards and spells to prevent any damage to the bar itself, but it didn't stop graffiti, I'm afraid." She sighed, pinching the bridge of her nose. "I'm starting to reconsider Ragnarok's offer to post one of his goblins outside the bar after closing hours. He's the head goblin of Gringotts Bank, and we also offer the goblins half-price off all food and drinks in return for having two goblins as guards in the bar." Hilda explained. "Even you guys must have noticed the two guard goblins always present?"

The rest of her friends nodded dumbly. All of them have seen those two goblins in guard armour whilst armed with spears every single time that they've come over to Starlight's Hall during opening hours. Ethan and Hilda get some trouble occasionally in the bar from those of the 'light' side, and they have both long lost patience when it comes to those from Dumbledore's side.

Ragnarok, having been a long time friend of Ethan and Hilda, as does all non-humans, especially with the opening of their bar, had heard about their problems as well, especially after Mundugus Fletcher had ended up stark naked in the back alley of the Hog's Head bar for the sixth time that year. Aberforth Dumbledore, the owner of the Hog's Head had found it very amusing, as he himself doesn't much like his brother and his doings all that much either, and see no harm in allowing Aurors to march off with Mundugus in tow.

As such, Ragnarok had approached Ethan with a proposition a few years back with the offer for offering two of his goblins as guards in return for having half-price off all food and drinks for all goblins which Ethan is quick to agree to, seeing as how even the vampire is getting tired of throwing out all members of the Light side out of his bar. Head first.

And those from the 'light' side doesn't seem to have the brains to realise that there are wards and spells on the bar to warn Ethan and Hilda of their presences the moment that they walked through the doors, if the goblins don't detect them first, especially after Ragnarok had told his goblins specifically to 'deal' with any from the 'light' side with any means necessary. And goblins aren't exactly known for

their subtlety. They are more of the type to 'attack first and ask questions later'.

Hilda sighed tiredly. "I've been doing this nearly every other week ever since the summer holidays," she muttered, pointing towards the graffiti on the walls. "Why do they hate us so much? We're not doing anything to them at all. We just wanted to be left in peace. Is that so much to ask for?"

Her friends exchanged looks sadly, not knowing what to say. They knew what Hilda had to endure, seeing as how nearly ninety percent of the Gryffindors in Gryffindor House have often voiced their thoughts about having a half-vampire in Hogwarts. Fortunately for Hilda however, the Ravensclaws and Slytherins especially were pretty protective of her, and Hufflepuff is as well, especially after Hilda had protected Neville from the Gryffindor first year boys, and the once shy boy had switched to Hufflepuff House at the end of last year.

The only Gryffindors to side with Hilda were the Weasley twins and Oliver Wood, but Oliver Wood didn't really show his support for Hilda openly to avoid alienating himself from his friends.

Hilda sighed. "I'm going to ask Jessica about some runes to prevent graffiti and vandalism," she muttered. She then glanced at her friends. "Go on in. I'll be with you in a moment. Once I've finished cleaning up, that is."

Her friends nodded hesitantly before entering the bar. All but Cedric who had taken one of the rags, and helping Hilda to rub at the graffiti. The dark haired girl raised a brow at that. "I can do this alone, you know?" she said quietly. "You don't have to help me."

"It's no problem," said Cedric, flashing his famous smile at Hilda that had made so many girls at Hogwarts swoon and faint in his presence. "I hate seeing you do this alone, and Mom often made me clean if I'm at home anyway. She always says that a girl will love a man who can do household chores."

Hilda laughed at Cedric's attempt to make a joke. "Anna will say that," she said, and Cedric grinned.

"You've never mentioned any of this to Draco and any of the others, even me, in your letters," he said quietly, and Hilda's face fell. He then glanced at the shorter girl. "Why? Why didn't you tell us that things were this bad?"

Hilda was silent for a long time before she glanced at the caramel-haired teen. "We've been dealing with the discrimination from Diagon Alley and from several others for a long time now," she told him quietly. "It isn't like it had just begun. And it isn't everyone that is doing this to us as well. It's only a few narrow-minded folks who have been doing this. Ethan and I have anticipated this happening when we've first decided to open Starlight's Hall. A bar of this nature is bound to have backlashes like this. Ethan faced lots of resistances from the Ministry when he was registering his license for a bar of this nature. Amelia Bones supported him, and if it hadn't been for her, we wouldn't have been able to open Starlight's Hall at all. Besides..."

Hilda glanced at Cedric who looked horror struck at what Hilda and Ethan have to face. Is the wizarding world really that horrible in human nature to those that are not humans? If so, he can understand why Ragnarok, Remus Lupin, Sirius Black and several others have lost all confidence in Dumbledore and several wizards and witches of the 'light' side.

"Besides, this is my problem, Cedric." Hilda informed him quietly. "I didn't want to trouble any of you with this. I didn't want to alienate you guys from your other friends because of me. It's not worth it."

"If they can't understand it, then they're not worth making friends with anyway." Cedric told her harshly. "Besides, you don't have to worry. Apart from Gryffindor House, the rest of the three Houses kind of liked you, save for a few." Hilda said nothing, and Cedric then sighed. "Some people can be so narrow-minded."

"This is just the way that our world works, I'm afraid." Hilda muttered.

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Half-an-hour later, both Hilda and Cedric came into the bar, bringing with them a strong smell of grease and polish, and Ethan nodded gratefully to them as Sirius waved his wand over them, getting rid of the smell.

"Thanks for the hard work," said Ethan. "I'll get Jessica to put a rune on the bar or something to prevent graffiti. But for now..."

Hilda sighed and nodded. She then turned towards her friends. "You guys got your letters?" she asked, taking her letter from her back pocket. Her friends all nodded and took their letters. Hilda then scanned the contents of her letter, and she sighed. "Oh boy... This is not going to come cheap, Ethan." She stated, glancing at her guardian. "Gilderoy Lockhart's books are really expensive. It is close to 200 Galleons easily just for DADA, not to mention the other books that I need to get."

"Well, it isn't like we can't afford it," said Ethan. He then frowned, reaching out with a hand for the letter that Hilda handed to him. He then snorted. "Nearly all of Lockhart's books are listed on here! Who's the new DADA teacher this year?"

"Dad doesn't know as well when I've asked him," said Draco with a shrug. "He says that the school board has no say in the teachers hired by Dumbledore which explains why Trelawney had been able to stay at the school for all these years despite having no obvious talent and gift in the Second Sight."

Hermione squealed just then, causing nearly everyone to jump. "But Lockhart is just so wonderful!" she squealed. "I mean, he wrote all those books, and all those things that he'd done and—"

"Hermione, we went to school with that fraud." Sirius interrupted the girl politely. "Lockhart was a few years above us, but he has no talent at all. He just went about trying to butter up to the teachers, and trying to get famous without working for it. James got really tired of him one day when Lockhart tried to butter him up just because he is the heir to the Potter House, and he then got back at him by pranking him. And trust me, I'm ready to bet that half of the things that Lockhart had supposedly done are either false or done by someone else. I know him."

Hermione looked torn. "B-But—"

"Remus gave me one of his books once," said Hilda. "'Voyages with Vampires', I think it was called." Remus nodded. "I know one of the vampires mentioned in that book." Hermione perked up. "His name

is Rhi. He is one of the vampire attendants under Jessica's grandfather. I asked him about it during Ritual Night. Rhi told me that he had never even met Lockhart. He was pissed off when I told him about Lockhart's book, and he told me that the one and only wizard that had ever defeated him in a duel is a man that he had respected. The first human to ever earn his respect, and he isn't Lockhart."

"B-But—"

"Rhi isn't the type to lie, Hermione," said Ethan, handing Hilda back her list, his face serious. "Jess and I grew up with him, and he helped raise Hilda as well. He is one of the vampire warriors that I knew of and respected, and he even served in Lord Alucard's inner retinue, a great honour for any vampire serving in the Falsoss clan, the ruling clan of the west. If he says that this is the truth, then it is the truth." He glanced at Hilda. "Didn't you kids say that you're going to get your supplies? Go then. I'll check up on Lockhart for you. And cross your fingers that he isn't your DADA teacher this year." He joked.

Draco shuddered.

"DON'T EVEN JOKE ABOUT IT!" All the children yelled at him. Yes, even Hermione.

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"What?"

Hilda thought that her ears must have been stuffed with cotton wool. How else would she have thought that she had just heard Lockhart announcing at his book signing at Flourish and Blotts that he is going to be Hogwarts' new DADA professor?

Neville groaned, palming his face. "Gran isn't going to be pleased about it," he informed Padma sourly. "She doesn't like Lockhart."

Jasper groaned. "Ethan's mouth is really a curse in itself. Now we must deal with that fraud as our professor for an entire year?"

Lucius Malfoy who had promised Ethan to keep an eye on all the children was twitching badly. He was in the same year as Lockhart



when he was in school, and had quite a bad experience with that man as a teenager. "I'm going to talk to the School Board about this," he muttered.

Something shoved into Hilda's back just then, and she nearly fell over, had it not been for a strong arm belonging to a grinning redhead with an identical redhead standing next to him. "Hey Hilda!" George Weasley greeted. "Fancy—"

"—meeting you here—"

"—of all places—"

"Fred! George!" Cedric grinned at them. "Hey guys!"

"Hey Ced!" The twins greeted in unison.

Cedric shivered. "You guys sound creepy when you do that," he muttered, and the twins grinned.

"Kids, come on, let's get outside," said the Malfoy head tiredly. "I doubt that we would be able to buy anything with this crowd anyway. I'll owl mail all your books, and you can just pass the money to Draco at school."

Padma nodded in relief. "Thanks, Mr Malfoy," she said in relief, and Lucius nodded to her politely, before the blonde man started ushering all the children out.

Hermione had grabbed hold of Hilda's wrist before pulling her out of the bookshop, with Cedric pushing her from behind, as Lockhart had started saying something about non-humans, and judging by the dangerous twitch on Hilda's eye, that is not a good thing.

"Hilda, just ignore him," said Hermione quietly. "You know what you've told me earlier. He's just a fraud."

"That's right," said Cedric, trying to push Hilda out of the bookstore as fast as he could which is no small feat. "Just ignore him."

"Being a bitch as always?" A nasty sneering voice was heard the moment that they've barely gotten even halfway out of the bookstore, and Hilda turned only to look straight at one Ronald Weasley. The

youngest Weasley boy looked at all of Hilda's friends before sneering at Hilda. "Figures. You are so pathetic that you need to cling onto boys just to get one to notice you like the slut that you are?"

Hermione, Padma and Hilda froze as the air turned cold almost immediately. 'Uh oh.'

The next moment, Hilda had leapt onto Cedric, restraining him with Jasper's help whilst Hermione was trying to restrain an angry Draco with Padma's help, whilst Luna was restraining her brother.

"Cedric, just ignore him! He's not worth it!" said Hilda harshly as Cedric was fighting tooth and nail to get out of Hilda and Jasper's holds.

"Ron, what are you doing— oh... Mr Malfoy, Miss Evans, Mr Diggory."

Arthur Weasley looked coldly at the Malfoy head who looked as if he would like nothing better than to hex the redhead man on the spot, judging by the fact that his hand tightened around his ebony stick where his wand was concealed.

"Arthur Weasley. I hope that you are well?" Lucius sounded as if he wished for the opposite instead. "Buying things for your daughter, I assume?"

He glanced over Arthur's shoulder, and Hilda followed his gaze only to see the youngest Weasley daughter standing behind her father with Percy Weasley standing beside his sister, glaring daggers at Cedric and Jasper who both glared right back. A rather worn-looking black cauldron stood in front of Ginny on the ground, and several old and tattered books were visible in it.

"Let go of me!" Draco snarled, trying to break out of Hermione's hold whilst trying to pull his wand out at the same time. "I dare you to say what you did about Hilda to my face once more, Weasel, and I'll rip that tongue of yours out!"

"Draco, just ignore him!" Hilda shouted to her friend. "He's not worth it! He's not even worth the air that you breathe!"

Lucius Malfoy then strode forward and picked up a tattered book out of Ginny's cauldron, sneering at the state of it, as several pages looked about to come loose from the spine. "All those raids that you've been doing, and you can't even afford to buy new books for her? Pathetic."

There was a dull clang as Ginny Weasley's cauldron was sent flying as Arthur Weasley leapt at Lucius. The shop owner was soon shouting at them both to stop the fight that only succeeded to make the fight more intense. Arthur Weasley was blasted back by Lucius that succeeded in throwing him back against a bookshelf, and books soon started raining down around their heads.

Cedric pulled Hilda out of the way as a rain of heavy tomes came down around their heads, and shielded her from the falling books. Hilda immediately headed over to Lucius, and between Cedric and herself, they both managed to separate Lucius and Arthur.

"Come on, Lucius, he's not worth it!" said Hilda quietly.

"Hmph!" Lucius snorted. He then threw the book that he had taken from Ginny's cauldron back towards the cauldron. "Take that book, girl. It's the best that your father can get you."

Hilda sighed. She then frowned as she glanced over her shoulder to see a young man with chin-length black hair and silver eyes, dressed in a white collared shirt with black pants and a black trench coat with dragon hide boots.

"Seth? What is it?" she muttered, recognising Eric Nightwing' most trusted attendant and assistant at once.

And if Seth is here, then it probably meant major trouble for the vampire community. Hilda had been hearing worrisome talks between Ethan and Jessica recently, as well as between Ethan and his brother recently, and those talks have her worried.

Something is going to happen.

"Word from the High Prince," said Seth quietly in a tone that only vampire hearing can hear. "Get the details from Master Ethan. It's a vampire problem."

Hilda frowned. She then nodded. "Okay." Seth then melted away into the shadows, and she then sighed, shielding her eyes as she looked up into the sky. "Seems like it's going to be problematic again..."

## Chapter Fourteen: A Problematic First Day

Starlight's Hall  
Knockturn Alley

"Ethan! I heard from Seth," said Hilda after rushing into Starlight's Hall, with one of the house elves taking her load off of her, and disappearing with a loud crack. "What's going on?"

Ethan glanced up calmly only to see the rest of Hilda's friends standing behind her, all watching on with interest, a furry purring cat cuddled in Hermione's arms. His – Ethan is pretty sure that it's a he at least – face was squashed like it had an unfortunate run-in with a wall, and it's ginger fur was quite unkempt as well. Draco was keeping well away from Hermione for some odd reason, and judging by the fact that he kept eyeing the cat in Hermione's arms warily, Ethan can take a guess why.

"In the guestroom, Hilda." Ethan stated. "It isn't something that they must know." Hilda nodded, and Ethan then turned towards Sirius and Remus who were both watching on with interest. "Can you both handle the bar for a few hours?"

Sirius and Remus both nodded.

"Of course."

Ethan then steered Hilda around by the shoulders before pushing her up the stairs to a room on the second level of the inn where all of their bedrooms were. Ethan then pushed her into a room that Hilda recognised as Voldemort's bedroom. The man (or currently teenager) is in the room, and the cover story that they've used whenever anyone asks is that Voldemort is a distant cousin of Sirius', as they both looked a little alike, and as Dumbledore knew of Voldemort's true name, Voldemort had to use the name of 'Thomas Black' as his alias.

Surprisingly enough, Voldemort doesn't seem to mind using that name, as the further that he kept away from his bastard father's name, all the better.

"Ethan?" Voldemort raised an eyebrow.

"Alright, what's going on here?" asked Hilda as she sat down at the edge of the bed. "Seth came by earlier and told me some things. What's going on?"

"I know. Senna came by as well," said Ethan with a sigh, leaning against the door, keeping the door closed with his weight. "Eric sent both Seth and her to give us a message as he couldn't trust anyone else with that task."

Hilda narrowed her eyes dangerously.

Senna and Seth were twins who both served as Eric's most trusted attendants and assistants. The High Prince had saved them both from sharing the rest of their clan's fate when their clan had committed treason against the Nightwing clan, and as both Senna and Seth were only mere younglings at that time – young vampires not yet of adult age, Eric had pleaded their case with his father, and Elton Nightwing had spared them both on the condition that they both serve Eric faithfully.

This isn't something that both twins have any objections about, and when they have reached adulthood, both Senna and Seth proved to be one of the most powerful vampires serving in the ruling vampire clan of the east, the Nightwing clan. The twins had also proved time and time again that they would willingly give their lives up if it meant that it could keep Eric safe.

Even among the vampire community, vampire twins are pretty rare, as vampire twins tend to be very powerful. Twins are like one single entity – merely halves of the same soul, and most in the Midnight Society think that that's why they are so powerful. Vampire twins are also extremely rare, as the fact that most vampire twins never managed to survive their birth, with only one managing to survive, probably had something to do with it.

Senna and Seth both have Eric's full trust, along with Ethan and Hilda's, as well as Elton's. If Eric had sent both Senna and Seth all the way out here from the Dark Forest when most vampires never liked contact with humans much, it must be something of significance.

"What's going on?" asked Hilda, suspicion growing in her. Voldemort was looking from one to the other as well with some confusion.

"Senna told me the full story," said Ethan seriously. "Hilda, two weeks ago, Lakra broke out from the rune imprisonment at Mist Isle."

Hilda paled, and Voldemort looked on in confusion. "Who's Lakra?" he questioned.

Ethan studied Voldemort for several moments before answering. "She's a Dark Priestess – a vampire who is highly skilled with runes and Black Magic. A vampire on the same standing as Jessica herself when it comes to Black Magic and runes," he explained. "She is also the right-hand of Orlando Darkenwing...the vampires' mortal enemy."

"Who is he?"

Ethan and Hilda exchanged looks before turning back towards Voldemort. "I've only ever met him once a few years ago when Ethan and Jessica battled him, and I barely managed to put him in eternal sleep with use of a powerful rune," said Hilda. "I was about seven or eight at that time. Orlando is an extremely powerful vampire. He is to the Midnight Society what you are to the wizarding community."

Voldemort's face dawned in realisation. "Oh."

Ethan sighed, massaging his temples. "The rune that Hilda used to put him in eternal sleep, also being reinforced by Jessica's runes, are powerful ones. It put him to sleep for eternity, though there is always the chance that the runes will break if a rune mistress like Jessica figured out a way to break it. Lakra, the one that I was talking about, was one of those with the ability to do that. After Orlando was sealed away, all his followers scattered, all of them bidding their time. Waiting for the day when their lord awakens."

"There is a legend among the vampire community," said Hilda, exchanging looks with Ethan. "'He who is the Lord of Pandemonium, will either bring about eternal darkness or unite both humans and non-humans'. The war that the vampires had with Orlando, though it's something that I've only heard about from Ethan, is one of those tales of some ambitious vampire trying to become the Lord of Pandemonium."

"Anyway, Jessica and some of the warriors from the Silverstein clan are now trying to track Lakra down," said Ethan. "But meanwhile, be on your guard, Hilda."

Hilda nodded. "Alright."

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September the first dawned bright and clear, with birds chirping and with the sun shining in the sky...

"Hilda, are you ready yet?" Remus poked his head into Hilda's bedroom. "Ethan is asking if you plan to leave today or tomorrow."

"I'm coming!" Hilda grunted as she pulled on a dark blue jacket whilst struggling with her trunk. Remus finally took pity on her, and took the heavy trunk off of her. Hedwig, Hilda's snowy white owl familiar hooted from her perch before the owl flew to her mistress and perched on her arm. "Come on, girl. Another year at Hogwarts. Looking forward to it?"

Hedwig hooted in answer, and Hilda laughed.

A loud and annoyed shout from downstairs just then had Hilda running at once like a pack of werewolves were at her heels, and Hedwig hooted frantically with fright, almost getting knocked off Hilda's arm.

"HILDA! ARE YOU COMING OR NOT? IF THE HOGWARTS EXPRESS LEAVE WITHOUT YOU, I'M NOT TAKING YOU ALL THE WAY TO SCOTLAND!"

"Coming!"

Platform 9¾  
King's Cross Station

Hedwig hooted disgruntling at Hilda whilst being balanced in her cage atop of Hilda's trunk as the dark haired girl pushed the trolley towards the scarlet train where steam was billowing from the funnel.



"Come on, girl. Just a few hours. You'll be out of that cage before you knew it." Hilda tried to coax her grumpy owl.

"Hilda! Hilda! Over here!"

Hilda's head snapped up just then only to see Hermione jumping up and down, waving at Hilda where she had been standing with Padma by the train, with Padma loading all of their things onto the train, with the help of a few of the older students who were kind enough to help Padma.

"Hermione! Padma!"

"The boys aren't here yet." Padma informed Hilda. "They'll probably be here in a little while. And then again, we're early anyway."

"So how do you girls feel about having Lockhart as your teacher this year?" Ethan asked with a grin, and he was met with three disgusted looks. Yes, even from Hermione. It took Hilda a little over three hours, but she somehow managed to convince Hermione that Lockhart is indeed a fraud.

"Don't even mention that name around me." Padma muttered warningly. "I've been hearing things from my parents that Parvati can go on and on about how wonderful and amazing he is, and how he is Merlin's gift to women. Dear Merlin..." She shook her head. "How can that idiot sister of mine be so easily taken in?"

"Nearly ninety percent of the female population worships him." Hermione pointed out. "Even I did until a little while ago when Hilda nearly lost her temper when I've praised him to the skies to her face."

Hilda smiled at that memory whilst Padma tried to hide a smile. Remus smiled at the girls before turning towards Padma. "You still not talking to your twin?" he asked gently, and Padma sighed.

"More like she's not talking to me," said Padma sadly. "I hadn't even back home for more than a month ever since starting at Hogwarts just because of the tension. And no, it's not your fault, Hilda." Padma cut in, seeing Hilda about to open her mouth. "If Parvati is dumb enough to believe the lies of that Ronald Weasley, then she's no better than the rest of the Gryffindorks in her House. I hadn't seen

you feeding on anyone yet. And all of us knew for sure that you'll probably prefer feeding on Ethan's cooking than on humans anyway."

Hilda smiled at that before a loud shout caught their attention, and all of them turned only to see Cedric coming towards them with Jasper, both of them pushing their trolleys. Neville was rushing towards them as well with Luna by his side, pushing a trolley on which was loaded all their things, with his grandmother scolding him to not run. Draco was approaching them from another direction, with Lucius Malfoy pushing his son's trolley.

"Our parents have appointments today, that's why they aren't here." Cedric answered the unasked question. "And what are you girls talking about earlier?"

"About Lockhart and why majority of the female population seems to like him." Sirius answered with a grin.

Jasper nearly groaned. "Oh Merlin... My mother kept harping on about him that I practically camped out at Cedric's house the entire holiday just to get away from it," he muttered. "And I do hope that we're not going to have to deal with that pompous ass of a peacock all year."

"Don't let your mother hear you say that, Jasper," said Augusta Longbottom, trying to hide a smile.

Jasper grinned at the elderly witch. "What she doesn't know won't hurt her," he said.

Ethan chuckled. "Alright. Get a move on, kids. It's almost time," he said. "Have a good year, and I'll see all of you at Christmas at Starlight's Hall again?"

The kids grinned at him. "Of course!"

"Have a safe year, Neville. And keep an eye on your sister," said Augusta, hugging Neville first before hugging Luna. "And stay out of trouble. I don't want another letter from Minerva, telling me that your dorm mates have kicked you out of the Tower."

"Gran..." Neville nearly whined. "It won't happen this year. I'm in Hufflepuff after being resorted at the end of last year, after all. I have friends in there. Justin, Ernie, Susan and Hannah are nice to me in there."

"And thank Merlin for that." Augusta muttered. "But you both keep safe, you hear me?" She said sternly. "I don't want any letters from you, hearing about mountain trolls or...or wandering into the Forbidden Forest or anything. This is to be a safe year. Don't take more years off my life, Neville. And look after your sister. Any trouble coming your way, inform one of the professors."

Neville nodded his head. "Okay!"

Luna surprised everyone by hugging Augusta. "I'll see you at Christmas, Gran," she said softly.

Augusta smiled at her before patting her head. "I'll look forward to it."

"Alright, time to go, Hilda," said Ethan, giving Hilda a quick hug. "And be careful, do you hear me?" He added sternly before lowering his voice. "I'll be looking into the Lakra affair, so don't worry too much about it. But keep your guard up. You and Jessica were the only ones who knew the exact rune pattern used to keep Orlando sealed after all."

Hilda nodded, her face serious. "Alright."

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Several of Hilda's friends popped by their carriage to say hi, including most of their friends from Hufflepuff like Ernie, Justin, Susan and Hannah. The Weasley twins popped by as well, though they were saying something about being unable to find their brother, and have came by Hilda's compartment in case that he is stirring up trouble for her again. Daphne Greengrass, her best friend, Tracey Davies, as well as Blaise Zabini came by to visit as well before going off again.

It was unnoticeable to most of Hilda's friends but only to the most observant like Cedric and Hermione, but the two have noticed that Hilda seemed a tad bit jumpy as compared to the previous year, and they wondered what Ethan had said to her. They knew that

something had happened in the vampire community, but Hilda had said nothing about it, and they knew better than to ask.

If Hilda doesn't want to tell you something, you'll be better off talking to a brick wall than getting her to spill the beans.

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The dinner at the Great Hall was as great as before, though with the absence of one Ronald Weasley.

Hermione had remarked out loud where the redhead had been, though she was glad that he wasn't there, as she didn't have to endure his glares the entire feast. Severus wasn't at his seat as well, and Montague, the Slytherin Quidditch captain had said something about the Potions master dealing with a late student who had crashed a flying car into the Whomping Willow in the school grounds – the most violent tree to ever exist in Hogwarts.

Luna had ended up being sorted into Ravenclaw, and Neville had made Hilda and Hermione promise to look after his sister, though Luna is currently chatting up a storm with a Ravenclaw first year by the name of Chelsea Chase, a Muggleborn, and both seemed to be best friends already.

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As usual, Hilda was the first one up the next morning, and as such, she was surprised to see Hermione in the Ravenclaw common room, already dressed. "Crookshanks demanded to be let out of the room two hours ago to hunt mice." Hermione answered tiredly.

Hilda nodded. "Ah."

"Padma still asleep?" Hermione asked as the two girls walked out of the common room, heading to the Great Hall for some breakfast.

"Nope. I woke her after I washed up at the bathroom," said Hilda with a slight roll of her eyes. "If I don't wake her, she'll probably sleep through the wake up bell." Hermione giggled slightly. "Come on, let's get some breakfast. Though I dread having to see Lockhart in there."

"Get used to it. He'll be here for an entire year at least," said Hermione, wrapping one arm around Hilda's shoulders. "Did Draco say anything about that? He said that Mr Malfoy was talking about speaking to the school board about this."

"Yeah. The school board doesn't have any authority over the hiring of teachers. That fell to Dumbledore. Thus, he can't do anything," said Hilda, and Hermione 'ohhed'. They entered the Great Hall just then and headed over to their house table where Cedric and Jasper were seated.

The entire school were used to the fact by now that students from the other Houses would often be sitting at the Ravenclaw table, and Professor Flitwick had actually charmed the house table so that it could seat all of them. The rest of the student body came filling in just then, with Neville and Padma sitting themselves just as the papers and the mail arrived.

Hilda who had been keeping a sharp eye on the Gryffindor table as several of the Gryffindor second years were casting them sour looks, especially at Neville, raised an eyebrow as a brown owl fell into the bowl of milk in front of Ronald Weasley, splashing the contents of the bowl everywhere. Hilda's vampire sight allows her to see further and clearer than a normal human, and the sides of her lips tilted in amusement.

"Close your ears, guys," said Hilda, covering her own ears, ready for the screech that she is sure would come later on. Her friends stared at her. "Weasley got himself a Howler."

Hermione looked on in confusion. "A what?"

"Just close your ears, Hermione," said Padma, covering her own ears. "You'll need it."

Before Hermione could ask why, a loud and thundering scream echoed throughout the Great Hall, and all throughout Hogwarts, causing everyone to feel as if the walls of Hogwarts is about to fall down around their ears. The voice of Molly Weasley was magnified nearly a thousand times as she screeched at her son in that loud banshee-like voice of hers.

"RONALD WEASLEY! HOW DARE YOU STEAL THAT CAR WITHOUT OUR PERMISSION! I AM ABSOLUTELY DISGUSTED WITH YOU! I WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN SURPRISED IF THEY HAD EXPELLED YOU! YOU WAIT UNTIL I GET MY HANDS ON YOU! I DON'T SUPPOSE THAT YOU'VE STOPPED TO THINK ABOUT WHAT YOUR FATHER AND I WENT THROUGH WHEN WE SAW THAT IT HAD GONE!"

Hilda who had remarkably sensitive hearing because of her vampire blood winced and ducked down into her seat, still unable to block out that insane volume of the voice because of her vampire senses. Another pair of hands covered her ears, and she looked up only to see that Cedric had covered her ears with his hands, wincing slightly as the voice got to his eardrums. He then winked at her. "You're more affected than me," he mouthed.

"LETTER RECEIVED FROM DUMBLEDORE LAST NIGHT. I THOUGHT THAT YOUR FATHER WOULD DIE OF SHAME. WE DIDN'T BRING YOU UP TO BEHAVE LIKE THIS! YOU COULD HAVE DIED! I AM ABSOLUTELY DISGUSTED WITH YOU!"

Over at the Gryffindor table, Hilda saw Oliver Wood trying to block out the loud volume, looking as if he was about to pass out anytime soon, and felt for him. He is right at the table where the Howler is at after all, and is bound to have more of the backlash than she did. Elves' senses aren't as sharp and profound like vampires, but it is also better than that of a human's. And with that insane volume of that Howler...it must be agony for the poor elf-in-disguise-as-a-human.

"YOUR FATHER IS NOW FACING AN ENQUIRY AT WORK, AND IT IS ENTIRELY YOUR FAULT! IF YOU PUT ANOTHER TOE OUT OF LINE BETWEEN NOW AND GRADUATION, I'LL GROUND YOU TILL YOU ARE A HUNDRED! OF ALL THE FOOLISH THINGS TO DO, YOU ARE TOO YOUNG TO DRIVE!"

The Howler then burst into flames, and the Gryffindor table burst into laughter at the embarrassed boy. Padma giggled and leaned over to whisper to Hilda and Hermione. "Looks like Draco's father might have the revenge that he wanted on Mr Weasley sooner than anticipated," she whispered.

The two girls giggled. All conversation stopped as Professor Flitwick made his way over to his house table, giving out the timetables for that year. The rest of the Heads of Houses were doing the same thing as well.

"Timetables, students." Professor Flitwick squeaked as he handed the second years their timetables. Much to the non-Ravenclaws' surprise, Professor Flitwick handed them theirs as well. "Professors Snape and Sprout handed your timetables to me." He explained before moving on.

Hermione was examining her timetable. "Oh good. We have Herbology first thing in the morning," she said cheerfully. "We're with Hufflepuff this year instead of Gryffindor. Thank goodness for that." She muttered.

Cedric grinned. "I think Professor Sprout is getting tired of having to protect her 'babies' from the scuffles created whenever you lot ended up fighting with Weasley and his goons." He pointed out.

"Hey, it's not our fault that that creep kept picking on Hilda!" Padma protested. "We Ravenclaws protect our own! There is no way that we would simply let Weasley pick on Hilda with us around!"

"Sure, whatever you say," said Jasper with a grin.

Hilda nearly groaned as she looked at her timetable, and everyone turned towards her with confusion. The blue-red eyed girl was glaring at her timetable as if trying to burn it with sheer willpower alone. And then again, she probably could do it anyway.

"What's up, Hilda?" asked Neville in confusion.

"We have DADA after lunch with Slytherin," said Hilda sourly. "Can I skip that lesson? I don't feel like sitting through an hour listening to that fraud and his high tales."

Hermione looked horrified at the idea of Hilda skipping a lesson. "You can't skip class!" she said, horrified. "What if he complains about it to Professor Flitwick or even to Professor Dumbledore?"

Hilda sighed. "Fine. I'll go then. But don't expect me to keep my hands to myself if that fraud starts on one of his nonsense," she warned.

"Wouldn't have it any other way," said Neville, grinning. "Come on, let's go. We have class." He then turned to where Luna was seated with Chelsea. "Luna, will you be okay on your own?"

"Don't worry, Neville. One of the prefects will show them to class," said Padma before Luna could answer. "They did so for us last year. It's nice to see that you care so much for your sister, but at least let her walk on her own." She teased, and Neville blushed. "Come on, Planter Boy. Let's get to class."

The Ravenclaws and one Hufflepuff then parted ways with Draco and the two older Hufflepuffs before they then headed out of the Great Hall and towards the school grounds where the greenhouses were, heading straight for Greenhouse Three.

Neville was almost skipping as he led the way, and the huge grin on his face was enough to give Padma, Hermione and Hilda an idea of just what kind of plants were being held in said greenhouse. Whenever the once shy boy was free, he usually helped Professor Sprout with her plants, and for some reason, Neville is really good with the plants. Even the dangerous Devil's Snare seemed to calm down with him around.

Padma had latched onto Neville's arm, proclaiming him as her partner for Herbology for the rest of the year, as only Neville had the skill to manage those plants to avoid getting burned, bitten or walking away from Herbology with some sort of injury on their person. Hilda doesn't count, as it is almost like the plants are scared stiff of her. Sure, she can manage those plants easily like Neville. But when the plants start to react in a way that she doesn't like, Hilda just glared at them, and they became almost as meek as kittens.

Hermione was laughing about it for an entire day after their first Herbology lesson the previous year when she was Hilda's partner.

Padma seemed to be a prime target for those plants the previous year that she decided to have Neville as her Herbology partner that year, as she could probably escape any unnecessary injuries



brought about by those 'innocent and beautiful creations of the Lord' (1), as Neville had phrased them.

"Uh oh. Professor Sprout doesn't look too happy." Hilda remarked as Greenhouse Three came into view, and she saw the pair of figures just outside the greenhouse.

"Why?" asked Hermione, squinting to take a clearer look, to no avail. No one had Hilda's sight. She soon got her answer when they approached the greenhouse and saw Lockhart following an annoyed Professor Sprout.

"Very well, thank you, Professor Lockhart," said Professor Sprout through tightly clenched teeth. "But I have a class to teach. Good day." She sounded as if she wished him the exact opposite instead. "Second years, into Greenhouse Three! And get yourselves ready."

Hilda couldn't wait to get into the greenhouse fast enough, as the looks that Lockhart is giving her made her want to plant a fist into his stupid face.

Everyone knew that all vampires are extremely beautiful. Even Ethan is, and the fact that nearly all the witches in Knockturn Alley squealed like a fan-girl as he walked past is proof enough. As a part-vampire, Hilda had those traits as well, and most of the boys in school were attracted to her because of this. It is only because of her 'guard dog' – one Draco Malfoy, that all of them backed off from her. Cedric, Jasper and Neville, along with a few of the others boys were the only exceptions.

Professor Sprout closed the door of Greenhouse Three behind her, and made sure to lock it firmly before she walked towards the teacher's table and stood behind it. "Good morning, class, and welcome to your first Herbology lesson of the year," she greeted. "Today, we are going to be repotting Mandrakes. Who can tell me what are the properties of a Mandrake?"

Unsurprisingly, Hermione's hand shot up into the air, narrowly missing Hilda by mere inches, and the blue-red eyed girl glared at Hermione, and she smiled back apologetically.

"Mandrake, or Mandragora, is a powerful restorative. It is most commonly used to return people who have either been transfigured,

cursed or petrified to their original states." Hermione stated, sounding as if she had just swallowed the textbook whole as usual. "A Mandrake's cry is also fatal to anyone who hears it."

Sprout nodded. "Excellent. Ten points to Ravenclaw," she said, and Hermione beamed. "Now, the Mandrakes that we would be repotting today are only babies, so their cries won't kill you yet. However, they will knock you out for a few hours, so make sure that all of you have your earmuffs on good and tight." Everyone placed their earmuffs onto their ears just then. "Grasp the Mandrake firmly by the leaves—" And she then grasped the Mandrake by the leaves and yanked it out of the pot, revealing a muddy and baby-like creature instead of roots.

And judging by the opened mouth and screwed up eyes, the Mandrake is letting out a loud wail. Hilda winced as she tightened her earmuffs onto her ears. She could still hear a little of the Mandrake's cry. One of the bad side effects for having enhanced senses, it seems like.

"Alright, get a move on!" Sprout told them, clapping her hands.

Everyone then reached forward and grasped a Mandrake, pulling them out of the original pots that held them. Hermione was practically hiding behind Hilda as the red-blue eyed girl yanked the Mandrake out. The Mandrake wailed at the top of its lungs. Most of the people in the greenhouse can't hear because of the earmuffs, but unfortunately, Hilda can still hear the Mandrake's cries, and it is a marvel that she hadn't been knocked out cold like Ernie McMillan, much to Justin's amusement who had been his partner.

Hilda glared at the Mandrake, and is it Hermione's imagination, but did the Mandrake whimper as Hilda poured soil over it?

Soon, the lesson was over, and everyone were making their way out of the greenhouse, tired out.

Hilda was especially grumpy, as her ears were still ringing after having to hear hundreds of Mandrakes screaming over each other for three hours straight, even with her earmuffs on. As such, all her friends have to endure hearing Hilda speaking louder than normal until her hearing returned to normal.

Lunch was a silent affair, and after that was DADA. Hermione and Padma have to practically drag Hilda to class with them, as the look on her face looks as if she would rather be anywhere but anywhere near Lockhart. And judging by the look that Lockhart had given Hilda earlier on, no one could blame her.

Most of the girls in Ravenclaw and Slytherin seemed excited as they made their way into the classroom, much to Hilda's disgust. Draco took his seat next to Hilda in the middle of the classroom with Padma sitting with Hermione in front of them. Daphne Greengrass and Tracey Davies took a seat behind them, with the two Slytherin girls being one of the rare few to not worship Lockhart like he's Merlin himself.

There was a loud creak of a door opening just then, and Lockhart stepped out of his room at the top of the stairs before making his way down.

"Me," Lockhart started with a blinding smile that showed off his brilliant white teeth, waving his hands about, dressed in that ridiculous outfit of his. "Gilderoy Lockhart. Order of Merlin, Third Class, Honorary member of the Dark Force Defence League, and also five time winner of the Witch Weekly's Most Charming Smile award. But I don't talk about that. I mean, I didn't get rid of the Bandon Banshee by smiling at her!"

He gave out a fake laugh, and Hilda dropped her head onto her arms, muttering something that sounded suspiciously like curses beneath her breath. Draco gulped next to her. He had a bad feeling about this...

"Just kill me now..." Hilda muttered into her arms, and Draco bit back a snigger.

"Now. You all would have a test to see how well that you've read my books," said Lockhart, passing around a bunch of parchments around the classroom. Draco took two sheets before passing the rest of the stack to Daphne and Tracey behind him, poking Hilda in the side.

Hilda sighed before taking the sheet from Draco and reading over the paper, her eyebrows rising further and further until it almost disappeared into her hair when she saw the questions. She stared in

disbelief, reading it again and again as if hoping she was reading wrong.

"What test? They are all about him!" Draco snorted.

Hilda tuned out the rest of Lockhart speaking after they've handed in their tests, being content to just look out of the window where she could see the lake from where she is seated. The tentacles of the giant squid were just visible where the giant squid was sunbathing lazily. A jab from Draco brought her back to Mother Earth only to realise that Lockhart was talking again.

The man had moved over to the teacher's table where a cloth covered cage was on it. Hilda narrowed her eyes as she could hear fluttering and frightened squeaking coming from it. Those sounds sounded almost like faeries or...pixies. Many of those tiny but harmless creatures lived around the Dark Forest, and they often played with her when she was little.

"Now, be warned! It is my job to arm you against the foulest creatures ever known to wizard kind! You may find yourselves facing your worst fears in this room. Know only that no harm can befall you whilst I'm here. All I ask is that you remain calm."

With that last statement, the cloth was pulled off, and several small blue pixies could be seen within the cage, all trying to escape from the small enclosure. The girls let out little screams, whilst several of the boys laughed.

Daphne raised an eyebrow. "Cornish pixies?"

Hilda glared at Lockhart, tightening her hands into fists so tightly that cracks actually formed on the desk beneath her fists. As a part vampire, she can understand the language of the other non-humans, as all vampires are Speakers. The pixies are all frightened, and they couldn't breathe properly as well, as the cage that they were in wasn't large enough to hold them all.

Like faeries, pixies are playful and mischievous little creatures that are free like the wind, and loved playing tricks on people. They never liked to be locked up. Several pixies and faeries lived in the Dark Forest where she had grown up, and she had often played with them when she was little.

"Be careful now. They can be dangerous when they want to be." Lockhart said before he opened the cage. "Now, defend yourselves!"

With loud screeches, the pixies flew out and started wrecking havoc, trying to get away as far from their captor as possible. This caused everyone to try to get away from them.

"Relax everyone!" Lockhart shouted as he raised his wand. "Peskipikdi Pesternomi!" He shouted, waving his wand...only for nothing to happen.

A pixie grabbed his wand and brought it up to where the large skeleton dragon was hovering, and used the wand to unlatch the metal hook, sending it crashing to the ground. Hilda narrowly rolled out of the way as the skeleton dragon collapsed into pieces on the ground, and she narrowed her eyes.

"Oh, for the love of...!" Hilda almost groaned. What did she do to deserve this? She kind of wished that she had stayed home after all. First the Mandrakes in Herbology class and now this? She raised the index and middle fingers of her right hand and took a swipe in thin air. A faint aura of magic lingered in the air at that, and all the pixies perked up at this. Faeries and pixies tend to be very sensitive to the changes of magic. "Impedimentum!"

The pixies froze in mid-air, and all watching students, even Lockhart, shivered at the murderous look on Hilda's face before she closed her right hand into a fist, and the windows of the classroom flew opened. The next moment, the pixies have all flown out of the windows.

Lockhart gulped and took a step back as Hilda turned and glared at him. That murderous glare could have reduced him to cinders faster than a fire spell could, and combine that with Hilda's blue-red eyes, and Lockhart suddenly wished that he is far FAR away from Hilda.

"Rethink your lesson plan in the near future, you bumbling idiot." Hilda told him coldly. "And if you don't mind, I'm going to head back to the common room where it is safer. Whoever thinks that you could actually teach must be smoking pot."

She then stormed out of the classroom.

Several moments later, Draco, Padma and Hermione chased after Hilda out of the Defence classroom. For someone so small, she sure could walk fast. The three finally found her at the entrance of the Ravenclaw common room, taking in deep breaths to try to calm herself down.

By now, all her friends knew that something must have happened back home, as Hilda had been awfully touchy ever since the previous day, and all of them have taken care to not set her off.

"Feeling better?" Hermione asked, and Hilda glanced at her friend before nodding. "Good."

There was a loud hoot just then, and everyone turned only to see Hedwig flying down the hallway before perching herself on Hilda's shoulder, nibbling at her ear, sticking out her leg where a letter was tied to it.

"Hedwig?" Hilda blinked before taking the letter and unfolding it, reading it. She then paled instantly.

Hilda,

Orlando's followers are on the move.

Jessica had gone to reinforce the runes holding Orlando in place, whilst a few others and me were tracking down Lakra. Apparently, several of Orlando's old followers are gathering. They're planning something, that's for sure.

Be careful, and don't do anything stupid or reckless. I'll get back to you soon.

-Ethan

(1) Quote from Plush's Fallen and Risen, Chapter 11

Upcoming Stories:

Different Beginnings: Vampire Redux (Harry Potter)

Set in DB Universe. Hilda and Draco never went to Hogwarts School. Instead, they attended Nightshades Academy, an elite school where races of all kinds attended. How will life turn out for Hilda?

## Chapter Fifteen: The Unheard Voice

If dealing with one Gilderoy Lockhart and his 'lesson' three days ago had Hilda ready to commit murder, if not suicide, then seeing the different coloured robed Quidditch teams of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry approaching the pitch from two different directions had Hilda ready to commit genocide.

It was the first weekend of the first week of school, and Hilda, Hermione, Padma and Neville have all decided to take their books to the Quidditch bleachers for some book work as Draco had his first training session with the Slytherin Quidditch team after he had passed the Seeker tryouts for the team that Marcus Flint had arranged during the holidays.

After that, Draco simply could not stop talking about Quidditch, Quidditch and more Quidditch during the holidays that nearly all his friends were sick of hearing about it. The only ones who could stand the Quidditch talk were only Jasper and Cedric, and that is only because the two of them were avid die-hard fans for Quidditch.

The girls and Neville were more interested in their schoolwork and the occasional talk about rune magic that is the only time when all her friends saw Hilda ever came to life. Hermione could have sworn that Hilda almost lives for rune magic. That is one topic that Cedric and Hilda could never shut up about. While Hilda is interested in Quidditch as well, she doesn't go so crazy over it like the boys.

And thus, on the first Saturday of the first week of school, Hilda found herself sitting in the front bleachers of the Quidditch stadium of the school with her friends as both the Slytherin and Gryffindor teams approached each other from different sides of the pitch. The red-blue eyed girl almost groaned out loud at this. She doesn't need to be a Seer like Jessica to see trouble coming their way. Trouble with a capital T.

"Uh oh. Looks like trouble." Padma muttered, almost seeing sparks fly between the eyes of the captains of both Quidditch teams.

"Hey, come on, let's go," said Hilda as she packed up her books and made her way down to the pitch. Her friends mimicked her actions, and in a matter of moments, they were all down on the pitch, standing by the Slytherin team.



"You have a new Seeker?" Oliver Wood questioned, returning the permission note that he had taken from Flint, even as some of the Gryffindor second years – Parvati Patil and Lavender Brown emerged onto the pitch as well. "Who?"

The Slytherin team then stepped aside to allow the new Seeker to step through, revealing a smugly grinning Draco Malfoy.

"Malfoy?" The new Gryffindor Seeker who turned out to be some mousy haired boy questioned.

"That's right, I'm the new Slytherin Seeker this year." Draco stated smugly. "And that's not all either." He showed off the broom in his hand, followed suit by his teammates, and Hilda rolled her eyes skywards with annoyance.

Lucius Malfoy was so delighted and proud when his son had gotten onto Slytherin's Quidditch team that he had bought a Nimbus 2001 as an early birthday present for his only child that Draco was quick to show to all his friends at Starlight's Hall, with Cedric and Jasper both begging Draco to allow them to have a quick fly on the broom. The adults were all quite amused, and Ethan had then added quite sarcastically that he might as well donate an entire set of Nimbus 2001s to the Slytherin Quidditch team.

Ethan had only meant for his passing remark to be a joke. He definitely didn't expect for Lucius Malfoy to actually take his words so seriously that Malfoy Senior really did donate an entire set of Nimbus 2001s to the Slytherin Quidditch team. Hilda had actually laughed herself out of her chair when she had heard about it from Severus and had seen the gobsmacked expression on Ethan's face. The vampire actually muttered something about some thick-headed nobles who couldn't see a joke even if it hits them in the face.

"Those are Nimbus 2001s!" Oliver exclaimed, seeing the brooms that had been featured on that month's version of Broom Weekly. "Where did you get those?"

"A gift from Draco's father." Flint explained, a muscle twitching at the side of his cheek telling the more observant students that he is still vaguely amused at that memory of Malfoy Senior 'donating' an

entire set of Nimbus 2001s to the Slytherin Quidditch team at Ethan's casual remark.

Draco grinned at the Gryffindor Quidditch team as Hilda palmed her forehead, muttering something incoherent beneath her breath, with Hermione and Padma both shaking their heads in dismay. Neville wisely said nothing.

Parvati moved closer to the teams and scowled at Draco. "At least no one on the Gryffindor team had to buy their way in," she said sharply. "They got in on pure talent."

There was deadly silence for several moments as the same angered looks were reflected on the faces of all Slytherins at the scene. Hilda was the first one to make a move, her eyes narrowing dangerously, and it could just have been Hermione's imagination, but she could have sworn that Hilda's eyes had flickered silver every now and then.

"If you do not have anything nice to say," Hilda growled darkly as she pulled her wand out, pointing it at a startled Parvati, "Don't say anything at all. Defluo."

Lavender Brown gave a shriek of horror the next moment when she saw that Parvati's mouth had disappeared, with the latter's hands flying to her now...non-existent mouth.

"What did you do to her?" Lavender Brown shrieked, and Hermione and Padma resisted the urge to cover their ears. God, can she shriek!

"Since she doesn't know how to control that mouth of hers, I'll do it for her," said Hilda uncaringly, ignoring the fact that her ears are currently ringing. "It'll stay like that as long as she doesn't know how to control her tongue."

"Undo that spell at once, you filthy little Mudblood!" Lavender shrieked, and a deathly silence fell over the entire pitch.

Enraged looks appeared on the faces of all the Slytherins, with Draco, Neville and Padma looking angrier than anyone had ever seen them before, whilst Hermione is looking particularly confused. Padma hissed like an angry cat, her eyes flashing as she pointed her wand at Lavender for even daring to utter a dirty word like that –

a word that her mother had sternly told her and her twin ever since they were both little toddlers to never say.

Hilda raised an eyebrow uncaringly, and this made Neville wonder if his friend even knew what that word means. "Do you think that I really care what you think of me?" she questioned, holding Draco back with Flint's help, as the blonde haired boy looked almost ready to leap on Lavender. "Why don't you come up with something more creative than that?" Hilda then leaned into Draco's ear. "Dray, I think we'd better leave for now. We'll meet you at the Great Hall for lunch later."

Draco nodded, before Hilda forcibly dragged both Neville and Padma away with Hermione's help away from the Quidditch pitch, dragging them until they could no longer see the pitch nor hear the angry voices of the people there. The dark haired girl only stopped when they reached the edge of the lake, and all four of them sat down by it – the place where they usually go to relax or to get away from things for a while.

"How dare she?" Padma gasped almost like she still had trouble breathing, which judging by the look on her face, wasn't that unbelievable. "How dare she say such a thing?"

"Did her parents never teach her any manners or just plain common sense?" Neville raged, nearly as upset as Padma.

Hermione looked from one to the other, and looked at Hilda who was merely staring at the water of the lake. "What is so bad about what Lavender called Hilda?" she asked, confused.

At that, three of her best friends looked at each other uncomfortably. Unlike Hermione, they have been brought up in magical families, and knew the customs and the ways of the wizarding families. Lavender Brown is a half-blood, with her mother being the witch, and thus, she knew of the ways as well.

Padma was the first one to break the silence. "It is the most horrible thing that one could call another, especially in the wizarding world." Padma said solemnly, her fists clenching and unclenching itself. "T-That 'M' word is a word that seems to be very popular among the old wizarding families, the purebloods especially, though there are some old wizarding families that seems to like it too. The pureblood

families believed that they are better because their blood hasn't been 'tainted'." She said sarcastically.

"But what is a Mudblood?" Hermione asked curiously, and all three of her friends flinched at that word, and grew angry again.

"Hermione, never repeat that word in front of us again, or anyone else for that matter." Neville told her seriously. "Mudblood is a name that the purebloods and the old wizarding families called the Muggle borns – you know, witches and wizards who were born to non-magical parents." He explained, and Hermione's face paled. "And there are extremely few pureblood families left now; we are nearly all dying out. At this rate, if they still wished to keep their blood 'pure'—" Neville had a sarcastic look on his face at that. "They will end up having to marry their own family."

"Not every pureblood family believes in this nonsense though." Hilda assured Hermione. "Jasper and Cedric's families aren't. The Zabinis, Greengrass, Longbottoms and even the Davies are one of those as well. Draco's family is one of the oldest pureblood families, and even though Drake's father wanted to keep family tradition by keeping their blood 'pure', even he knew that it won't be possible for long." She sighed. "Muggle borns suffered through quite a bit of injustice just for being Muggle borns. That's just the way that this world works. The non-humans never liked it as well, that's why Ethan was so hesitant in sending me to wizarding school in the first place."

"That's horrible!" Hermione exclaimed. "But why did Lavender call you a...a..."

"Mudblood?" Hilda quipped, and Hermione nodded timidly. "Well, she, like almost everyone in school don't really know my heritage, do they? I've heard the rumours. They say that I'm the offspring of a vampire and a normal human. To them, half-breeds are as good as Muggle borns as well. I know for one that the Ministry had been trying to find excuses to put all sorts of decrees over my head. It is only in part due to Amos and Lucius that they haven't been successful so far. After all, it is common knowledge that the non-humans never interacts with humans if they could help it."

"Hey Hilda, question?" Neville piped up. "Were you serious when you say that the spell that you've cast on Parvati won't come off?"

Hilda grinned. "No. It'll wear off in a few hours. I didn't make that spell permanent. But it'll teach her a lesson, wouldn't it?"

Her friends laughed.

XXXXXX

Unknown Location

Ethan frowned as he knelt down on the forest bed by this strange runic symbol, with the familiar stale smell of blood reaching his nostrils. Nearly every inch of this part of the forest was soaked in blood. Not one inch was blood free, and it is enough to nearly make Ethan puke. He knew enough of runes to know that whatever rune that had just been performed here must be a powerful one, yet also a forbidden one, as it probably requires a large amount of sacrifices.

"Hey Jess! Get over here!" Ethan called out to the bleak darkness. "I found something!"

There was a light wind before Jessica appeared by his side, a frown on her face. "The first seal is down," she informed Ethan who paled. "That means Lakra is definitely out, and she is wearing down all the nine locking seals that had kept Orlando in place. I'll send word to the guardians of the seals, and get them to reinforce the guards."

Ethan shook his head, before returning his focus to the rune that he is currently examining. "Check this one out," he said. He then brought his hand up to his face only to see that the blood on the rune was still fresh. "The blood is still fresh, which means that Lakra had just passed by here not long ago. But what is this rune?"

Jessica frowned as she knelt down by the rune, studying the rune closely. "I've never seen something like this before," she admitted. "But from what I can see, it seems to be a direct opposition of the sealing rune that Hilda uses to seal Orlando away." Seeing Ethan's confused look, she sighed. "Look, the rune that Hilda uses back then reinforces the energy of the moon and the night – energy that we vampires took our strength and powers from. As long as there is a moon in the sky, the seal won't break. The seal is also at its weakest during the time of the new moon. This rune—"

Jessica touched the rune beneath her. "—is a direct opposition of the Night Rune – the locking rune. It uses the negative energies that feed off a vampire's power. It is the perfect opposition for the Night Rune. This is probably what Lakra uses to break the first seal down. But judging by the energies still floating around, along with the astounding number of sacrifices used..." Jessica trailed off, studying the blood all around her. "—she probably can't use this rune too many times in the same month. Even when I use some of the more powerful runes, I have to rest for a few months before I can start using them again. We still have some time before Lakra targets the second seal. She has to break them in the same sequence that it was put up, or the entire process will fail."

Ethan nodded. "I'll ask Hilda for the exact sequence," he said, standing up. Sighing, he then turned and looked at the moon in the sky. "Damn... I have a bad feeling about this..." He muttered.

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"Kill... Kill... Rip... Tear... Blood..."

Hilda was walking along the hallway, about to return to her common room from the library when she heard a strange voice. Gasping, she spun around, effectively dropping all the books in her arms onto the ground, causing it to land on her foot painfully. Hilda ignored the throbbing pain in her foot as she looked in several directions at once, but saw nothing, when a hand clamped down on her shoulder all of a sudden.

This sudden action caused her to twist the wrist of that hand, and a loud and pained yelp caused her to spun around only to see Draco standing behind her, nursing a pained wrist.

"Sorry." Hilda muttered as she picked up all her fallen books. "I thought that you were someone else."

"What's up with you?" Draco frowned. "I've never seen you so agitated before. You had been awfully touchy ever since the start of term. I don't know what Ethan had said to you to cause you to be so touchy, Hilda, but you should stop taking it out on us."

"Sorry." Hilda muttered.

"It's alright," said Draco with a shrug. "So what's wrong?"

"I heard a strange voice earlier." Hilda said with a light shrug, and Draco looked at her incredulously.

"A strange voice?" he repeated.

Hilda nodded, a frown on her face. "It's just...weird." She admitted. "I'm probably not one to say this, but it just about spooks me out. It sounds like it's coming from all around the castle, and sounded a tad bit muffled – almost like something is preventing me from hearing it properly. And whoever the owner of this voice is, it almost seems...hungry."

Draco stared at Hilda for a very long time before he spoke again. "Are you missing home too much, Hilda?" he asked.

Hilda scowled at Draco. "I know what I heard!" she snapped.

Draco raised both his hands up in surrender. "Fine. Fine. You don't need to bite my head off," he said. "And I've never seen you afraid of anything before, yet you said that this voice scares you." He bit on his lower lip. "Maybe...just maybe you were hearing things? I mean, with whatever affair that is keeping both you and Ethan busy recently, you are probably stressed out."

"Yeah." Hilda said, not entirely convinced. "Maybe."

Draco frowned. "Let's just wait and see what happens," he said. "There's not much that we can do. If we tell any of the teachers, they'll probably think that we've gone crazy. Though you have to admit though, it is kind of weird."

"Yeah," said Hilda, worried. "Let's go, I don't want to stay here any longer than necessary."

Draco nodded before walking down the hallway. Hilda turned around on the heel of her foot before she followed him, biting on her lower lip as she looked behind her. She saw nothing but just the bleak darkness of the hallway behind her, and she shivered lightly.

She also remembered what the High Prince had said to her once when she was studying runes.

'If you see any signs – any signs or omens that seemed to want to tell you something, or even just your gut feeling acting up, don't ignore it. Recognising those signs often meant the difference between life and death.'

Hilda frowned. 'An omen?' she thought. She then shook her head and left quickly after Draco, inwardly wondering just what the future would bring, and if what she'd heard is a sign of what is to come.



## Chapter Sixteen: The Writing on the Wall

Hilda groaned as she woke up on Halloween Day.

Halloween Day had always been a festive day of sorts for the witches and wizards, but for the Midnight Society, Halloween Day or Samhain Night is a 'ritual night' of sorts for them. Traditionally, all members of the Midnight Society must be present for Samhain Night, half-blood or not, but because of Dumbledore and a certain Ministry, Ethan had decided it best if Hilda skip Samhain Night whilst she is still in school. At least, until she comes of age. And furthermore, with Orlando's followers running around recently, it will be safer for Hilda if she is in school.

Hilda had never really enjoyed Halloween at Hogwarts, as being part-vampire, Halloween Day or Samhain Night had always been very important to them, being a symbol of what they represented. But for the humans, it is more like Halloween is just a festival day to them, something that Hilda isn't happy about, as she had seen small witches and wizards dressing up as vampires and whatnot, seemingly mocking them in their own way.

Thus, all of Hilda's friends knew that she is always in a particularly foul mood on Halloween Day. She basically glared at anything that moves, and practically kicked everyone that even looks at her wrong. And may Merlin help you if you bother her for a less than life-and-death situation.

Even as she ate her own dinner, Hermione glanced over at Hilda who wasn't eating anything, but was merely resting her chin on an upturned palm, glaring at nothing in particular. Come to think of it, she never did see Hilda eat anything on Halloween Day. She wonder for a moment if this has anything to do with vampire culture... Unlike Hermione and her other friends, Hilda never did eat as much as they did. And is it just her, but is the red in Hilda's eyes more profound that day?

Finally, the red-blue eyed girl sighed and turned towards her friends. As usual, all of them were seated at the Ravenclaw table for the Halloween feast. Well, Hilda is the only one among them that is not eating, at least.

"Done?" she asked tiredly.

"Yes, Your Grumpiness, we're done here." Padma teased, finishing up her dinner before getting up from her seat, along with all the others. "Come on, let's head back to the common room." She turned towards the boys – Draco, Neville, Cedric and Jasper. "You boys coming too?"

"Yeah."

The seven of them then headed out of the Great Hall, with Hilda walking faster than necessary. Hermione frowned before she took a glance around, and noted several dark looks at Hilda, particularly from the Gryffindor table, and she sighed. Now she understood why Hilda is always in such a foul mood on Halloween.

The bushy haired girl sighed as she followed her friends as they made their way down the hallway to return to the Ravenclaw common room. Hilda who was taking the lead stopped in her tracks all of a sudden, nearly causing Padma who was right behind her to bump into her.

"Ow!" Padma whined, rubbing her bruised nose. "What is it, Hilda? Why did you stop all of a sudden?"

Hilda was looking left and right, a slightly frantic look in her eyes.

"What is it?" asked Cedric with concern. He had never seen Hilda like this before.

"That voice..." Hilda said slowly. "There it is again..."

"Rip... Tear... Kill..."

The raspy voice echoed through the hallway that they were currently in, hissing as it moved. And Hilda can't help feeling as if the voice seemed to have come from within the walls. The red-blue eyed girl can't help but have a very bad feeling about this. As she's part-vampire, her sixth sense and her sense for danger had always been stronger than most humans, and she had always trusted her instincts.

"I think it's going to kill someone," she said before she moved down the hallway after the voice, determined to catch it before it tried to hurt anyone.

"Kill?" Jasper said, bewildered, before the lot of them started chasing Hilda down the hallway. Despite her size, Hilda can be pretty fast when she wants to, probably due to the vampire blood in her veins, that even Jasper and Cedric, and even Draco – with all three being Quidditch players in their teams could barely catch up.

"Hilda! Wait up! Not so fast!" Neville called out, running as fast as his short legs could permit him to move.

Cedric was in the lead – just behind Hilda, when he nearly crashed into the raven-haired girl as she stopped in her tracks in the middle of a deserted hallway. The rest of his friends barely managed to stop themselves from crashing into Cedric and Hilda in time.

"Oh my..." Hermione gasped, both hands flying to her mouth in horror.

The ground of the hallway was flooded with water, and there was even red writing on the wall which looks suspiciously like blood. Hilda took a few sniffs in the air, and she frowned slightly as she recognised that smell for what it was. 'Roosters' blood?' she thought, bewildered.

"'The Chamber of Secrets has been opened. Enemies of the Heir, beware'." Jasper read out the writing on the wall, his voice shaking slightly. He had a very bad feeling about this. "It's written in blood."

Hilda's sharp eyes then noted something that none of them had seen right from the start. "Oh no..." Padma gasped as Hilda moved closer to the side of the writing on the wall. "It's Mrs Norris... Filch's cat."

The cat was hung up by her tail, and was extremely stiff.

Cedric gulped before turning towards his friends. "Let's get out of here," he said, and he was relieved to find that his voice came out steady.

"S-Shouldn't we try to help—" Neville started, but Cedric shook his head.

"Trust me. We don't want to be found here." The older boy told him.

Too late.

A babble of voices and footsteps echoed around the corner just then, and within moments, the hallway that they were gathered in were filled with students – apparently all back from the Halloween feast taking place in the Great Hall earlier. All of them stopped in their tracks just then, and saw what had grabbed the attention of the seven students standing in the middle of the hallway.

"Oh boy..." Neville groaned, as he took in the looks on the faces of the surrounding students. "This doesn't look good..."

"What is going on here?" A voice called out, as the teachers pushed their way forwards, with Filch also making his way towards the front, only to stop when he saw his cat, with Hilda standing just mere meters away from said cat. Hilda can just imagine how it would look like to anyone watching.

"Mrs Norris?" Filch babbled as he moved closer to his cat, before his eyes fell on Hilda. "YOU! You killed my cat!" He screamed as he took a step towards Hilda, not noticing the dangerous look in her eyes.

Draco was the only one among Hilda's friends who understood what Halloween or Samhain Night meant to the vampires and the creatures of the night. It is on this one day every year when their instincts, their dark nature, comes out in full force, and they won't be able to control their instincts, and their dark side that easily on this one night every year. Samhain Night is the one day of the year when the powers of the dark is at it's strongest. That usually also explains why Hilda is particularly dangerous to the Gryffindors, and to everyone surrounding her on this one day every year. And it is also why Hilda tends to disappear on this one day every year.

Thankfully, Severus got to Filch before Hilda could inflict some serious damage to the caretaker, with the Potions' master knowing just what Samhain Night meant to the vampires and the creatures of the night. Whenever Hilda vanishes on Samhain Night, she usually

takes refuge in Severus' chambers, occupying herself with some book, until the 'danger period' was over.

Dumbledore then approached Filch who was crying and hugging a rigid Mrs Norris, who seemed to be dead in all senses of the world. "She isn't dead, Argus." The Headmaster told the caretaker calmly, after a cursory glance over the cat. He then glanced at the surrounding students, before turning back towards the caretaker. "Let's take her somewhere so that we can examine her."

Lockhart stepped up just then, bearing his hundred-watt smile as always. "My office is near closest, Headmaster. Why don't we move up there?" he suggested.

"Thank you, Gilderoy," said Dumbledore, before he turned towards the students. "All students are to return to their common rooms immediately. All students..." He trailed off, glancing at the seven who have discovered Mrs Norris. "...but the seven of you."

Severus approached the seven students as the teachers and the Headmaster turned and walked towards Lockhart's office. "Come on," he said quietly, ushering them towards the office.

As they entered the office with all the smiling Lockhart portraits, Dumbledore barely managed to get Filch to part with his cat, where he laid the stiff cat on the desk, and started examining her carefully. McGonagall ushered Filch to one of the couches in the office where he started to sob.

The seven students stood in a corner, with Jasper and Cedric standing protectively in front of the younger students. Padma and Hermione were holding onto each other, a look of slight fear on their faces. Severus stood not too far away from them, keeping a particularly close eye on Filch and Hilda. He knew that young vampires never had much control over their dark selves, particularly part-vampires. Ethan had told him so when Hilda had first started going to Hogwarts.

Lockhart was probably the only teacher present that seemed unaffected by the current course of events, as he cheerfully recited the names of all the different curses that Hilda could have used on the cat, and how he could have prevented them. From beside Hilda,

Hermione could feel her best friend's temper slowly reaching the surface, judging by the continuous twitching of her left eyebrow.

Fortunately, Dumbledore chose to speak up just then, possibly saving Lockhart's life from a part-vampire that currently had little to no control over her raging instincts. "She is not dead, Argus," he stated calmly. "She had just been petrified. Though I do not know how."

"She did it!" Filch cried out, pointing at Hilda.

"Did not!" Padma and Hermione both cried out simultaneously. "We were with Hilda the whole day!"

"And I was with her the entire morning." Severus drawled.

"She did it! Who knows what dark spells she knew from those bloodsuckers that she is always with!" Filch spat.

The temperature fell several degrees immediately, and Draco and Cedric exchanged alarmed looks. 'Uh oh.' Draco thought.

Hilda exploded.

That is the only thing that can describe the sudden spike of magic and killing intent that caused all the portraits in the room to hide behind their frames, and the breaking of several china and glass ornaments in the room. Lockhart actually dropped down to the ground whilst covering his head with both hands, shaking all the while, looking as if a nuclear bomb is about to go off at any moment, which isn't too farfetched, Draco thought warily to himself, looking at his best friend.

"You know, I've had it with you lot always pointing fingers at me whenever something happens in this fucking school!" Hilda growled, her eyes flashing dangerously. Draco gulped. Oh shit. Hilda is cussing. Not a good thing. "And if I had wanted to kill Mrs Norris, I would have found a much better way of doing it! If it was me, you would never be able to find her body, no matter how hard you've tried! And trust, me, nearly ninety percent of the student population in the school would simply love a chance to wring the neck of that blasted cat of yours!"

"How dare you?" Filch screamed. "Mrs Norris is harmless, and would never hurt a fly!"

Draco snorted at that. Saying that Mrs Norris is harmless is almost like saying Hilda isn't a danger hazard to the Gryffindors when she is in a bad mood.

"It isn't Hilda." Draco insisted. "All of us were with her the entire day. And I'll advise you not to point your fingers at her any longer when it isn't her who had petrified Mrs Norris."

"And why not?" Filch sneered at Draco.

"Because if you do so, I'm fairly certain that Ethan or Jessica would kill you. And that is excluding the High Lord and High Prince of the Nightwing clan." Draco pointed out, neglecting to mention the fact that Hilda could probably kill Filch herself before anyone even realizes what is going on.

Everyone present paled instantly. Everyone knew that vampires on a whole, are extremely protective of their young, given the fact that there is few enough of them as it is, and would go to extreme levels to protect them.

"That is enough," said Dumbledore calmly. "No student has the knowledge to do this, Argus. And even the vampires do not have any spell in their possession that petrifies. Kill maybe, but not petrify. But we have a way to cure Mrs Norris. I hear that Professor Sprout has a batch of Mandrakes. As soon as they reach their full size, Severus can brew an antidote, and Mrs Norris will be fine."

Professor Sprout nodded to this.

"I can do it." Lockhart offered enthusiastically, having gotten over his fright from earlier. "I've brewed it hundreds of time. I can probably do it in my sleep—"

"Excuse me, I do believe that I am the Potions Master of Hogwarts." Severus cut in, sneering and glaring at Lockhart.

"Well...yes... I just thought that I'd offer to help." Lockhart muttered, nearly shrinking into himself under Severus' deadly glare. "Just to be of service..."

"Shut up, Gilderoy!" Severus snapped. He then turned towards Dumbledore. "Headmaster, I'll escort these students back to their common rooms."

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Ten minutes later, the seven of them were gathered on one of the moving staircases of Hogwarts that led to the Ravenclaw common room. Severus had dropped them off at the staircase before making his way towards the dungeons to the Slytherin common room.

"What do you guys think is going on?" Neville asked, breaking the silence that had fallen upon them.

"I don't know." Jasper admitted. "All that we know is that Hilda had been hearing a voice that only she could hear. And when we chased the voice down, we found a flooded hallway, the words on the wall, and that Mrs Norris has been found petrified." He frowned. "Something is going on in this school."

Cedric sighed. "You got that right."

Hilda sighed. "Can't we have just one normal year in this school?" she muttered. "I swear, if something happens next year as well, I'm transferring to Nightshades where Alec is."

A brief flash of jealousy flashed through Cedric's eyes at that, but it was gone so quickly that no one noticed it, not even Hilda.

"It's just weird though." Padma piped in, and her friends nodded. "The voice that Hilda heard... The writing on the wall... And then Mrs Norris was found petrified."

Hermione frowned, looking from one to the other. "Do you think Hilda should tell the professors?" she asked. "About the voices?"

Jasper gaped at Hermione. "Are you mad?" he questioned.

Draco shook his head at that. "No Hermione. I don't think that Hilda should say anything," he said tentatively. "Let's keep it to ourselves for now as we try to figure out what's going on." He bit on his bottom lip as he looked from one to the other, finally resting his gaze on



Hilda who had been pretty silent so far. "Hearing voices is never a good sign, even in the wizarding world."

A/N: All right, so I've gotten some complaints about the canon events of this story. Yes, the Chamber has been opened, but the main mastermind is not Voldemort this time around. This is why I'll still be taking it through step by step.

Anyway, I hope that you like this chapter, and please read and review!

## Chapter Seventeen: Flight of Life

The attack on Mrs Norris was all that anyone at Hogwarts School could talk about for days. Argus Filch was also keeping the memory of the attack well ingrained in everyone's minds by hanging around the spot where Mrs Norris was discovered, trying all kinds of ways to clean off the writing on the wall which just refused to come off.

The caretaker had also become unbearably bad tempered, giving out detentions to students for the most ridiculous reasons. Susan Bones of Hufflepuff got a detention for 'breathing loudly' and Anthony Goldstein and Terry Boot of Ravenclaw got detentions for 'looking happy'.

The incident involving Mrs Norris also had students rushing to the library to check out the copies of *Hogwarts: A History*. Hence, Hermione was very bad tempered about it, as she hadn't packed her own copy of *Hogwarts: A History* into her school trunk that year, seeing as how she couldn't get it to fit in with all the Lockhart books that are required that year for DADA.

Rumours of the Chamber of Secrets also flew through the school like wildfire. And by the time November the first rolled about, everyone had their own theories and ideas about what and where the Chamber was, and just what kind of monster lived inside it.

Hilda had also been unusually silent after the incident with Mrs Norris. In the usual way, the dark haired girl is one with few words, but those that knew her well – Draco, Hermione, and possibly Cedric, could tell that the incident is bothering her, and maybe something else too.

Draco knew that something had happened back 'home' – within the Midnight Society, as his father had told him so in his letters, and that Ethan seemed to be running around a lot lately with that Jessica Falsoss vampire – a female vampire that Hilda had only mentioned once in passing, and that said vamp is the High Priestess of the royal vampire clan of the west. Thus, of late, Ethan had left only Remus and Sirius in charge of the bar with the house elves assisting them in any way that they could.

But not one of Hilda's friends – Hermione, Padma, Neville, Luna, Jasper, Cedric and Draco was stupid enough to ask Hilda the

reason why. They knew her long enough and well enough to know that she won't willingly part with information that she had already declined to give. They'll be better off talking to a brick wall.

Furthermore, they knew enough to not stick their noses into Midnight Society business.

The patrols by the Prefects in Hogwarts School had also increased in intensity, though done in pairs this time, and the students of the school were also going around in pairs, particularly the Hufflepuffs.

The fact that she wasn't able to read up on the Chamber of Secrets' history wasn't the only thing that is putting Hermione in a bad mood. The fact that the majority of Gryffindor House had been looking at Hilda with suspicious eyes and treating her like a bomb that is about to explode is also enough to make Hermione want to explode.

"Honestly, where are all their brains?" Hermione complained to Padma, Hilda and Neville one morning on their way to Transfiguration class. Ravenclaw House shared Transfiguration class with Hufflepuff House that year, with Slytherin and Gryffindor sharing it together. "One would think that there is nothing but cotton wool stuffed in the ears of those Gryffindorks! Or that there is just empty air in between their ears!"

They have just finished breakfast at the Great Hall, and as Jasper and Cedric, both being Fourth Years, have lessons that started early, they have bade the younger students farewell before heading off. The younger students have also saw fit to leave early, as the usual business of Gryffindor House making the usual snide comments of Hilda opening the Chamber and petrifying Mrs Norris is happening as usual, much to Hermione's disgruntlement and displeasure.

"Everyone knows that the Heir of Slytherin is a pureblood witch or wizard that is related to Salazar Slytherin." Padma agreed. "Hilda is neither. I mean, she isn't a pureblood, and neither is she related to Salazar Slytherin. It's just absurd."

Hilda sighed. "Just let them talk," she told her friends. "I'm sure that it'll go back to normal soon."

"Just how soon is 'soon' anyway?" Hermione asked, not happy in the least.

The four students reached the Transfiguration classroom just then, and all four entered, taking their usual seats – with Padma sitting next to Neville, and Hermione taking her usual seat next to Hilda somewhere in the middle of the classroom.

The rest of the class soon started filing in, and Transfiguration class soon begun.

The second years were covering more advanced Transfiguration that year, as compared to their previous year when they were just focusing on transforming objects. Second Year Transfiguration involved them learning how to transform animals into objects, which is part of the reason why several of the students had brought their pets with them into class.

Neville looked absolutely horrified at the fact that he has to transform his beloved Holly into a water goblet when Professor McGonagall had told them their lesson objective for the day. The three Ravenclaw girls could easily read his thoughts – what if he can't turn Holly back?

Holly is a small owl that Hilda, Padma, Hermione, Draco, Jasper and Cedric have all chipped in to get as a birthday present for him last July, especially after the loss of his toad Trevor. No one had been able to find the culprit that had mangled the poor toad, but Hilda had a sinking suspicion that it had to do with one of Neville's old Gryffindor dorm mates.

Thus, because of Neville's nervousness over changing his precious owl – his first ever present from friends, into a water goblet, no matter what he had tried, he just can't complete the transformation. Holly remained stuck looking like a half-goblet half-owl, thus making the usually rather patient owl rather annoyed.

"You need to focus, Mr Longbottom." Professor McGonagall told him sternly as she laid eyes on Goblet-Holly, tapping her wand on the partially transformed owl to transform her back. "Imagination and Focus counts a lot in Transfiguration." Neville grinned sheepishly, and Padma giggled next to him.

Hermione looked thoughtful for several moments before her hand shot into the air, catching the attention of Professor McGonagall and the rest of the class.

"Yes, Ms Granger?"

"Professor, what can you tell us about the Chamber of Secrets?" Hermione asked.

It was almost as if that is the magic word to silence the entire class, as all chattering stopped immediately, and every student in the class had their eyes on Professor McGonagall. The stern witch took a look around her classroom and gave a sigh, knowing that she wouldn't be able to get on with the lesson if she does not answer the question.

"As all of you might be aware of, Hogwarts School was founded over a thousand years ago by four of the greatest witches and wizards that had ever existed at that time – Godric Gryffindor, Rowena Ravenclaw, Helga Hufflepuff and Salazar Slytherin. Three of the founders co-existed in harmony, but one did not. Salazar Slytherin wished to be more selective about whom to teach. He thought that magic should be kept within the children born to magic parents – in other words, purebloods."

Hilda who was resting her chin on an upturned hand snorted. She knew the true version of Hogwarts' history.

The Samhain Night rituals held by the vampires nearly always took place in the Dark Forest – part of the Nightwing clan's territory. The rituals are an important part in a vampire's life, and thus, every vampire that had ever existed always took part in it. Last Samhain Night had Hilda talking to a nomad vampire by the name of Riley that had lived during the days of Hogwarts' founding.

In those days, the discrimination of the magical creatures isn't a common thing, and vampires were treated as normal as everyone else in the magical world. The vampire that Hilda had spoken to, Riley, had helped with the wards and the building of Hogwarts, and knew the history and the four founders well. He was particularly close with Salazar Slytherin who is a lot like himself.

Unlike common belief, Salazar Slytherin does not hate the Muggle Borns – the children born to non-magical parents. It's just that he

had lived in a time when the Muggles believed in the existence of witches, wizards and magic, and had believed them evil, hence hunting them down and burning them at stakes. Hogwarts School was built in the first place because of that, and the Christian Wars especially did not help any matters at that time.

Each of the four founders had different jobs at the time of the founding, and Salazar's was to find magical children born to non-magical parents, and to bring them to safety, also erasing the memories of their parents. It is for safety, as there is always a chance that the parents might murder their own child because of the hatred and fear for anything unknown and magical at that time.

Riley had told Hilda that Salazar was worried about the decision about the magic learning, and had wanted to keep that knowledge within the magical families just so that they do not expose themselves or their world accidentally. But the other three founders had refused, and a simple argument between Salazar Slytherin and Godric Gryffindor over how to protect their world and their school soon escalated to a big issue – since both men were such hotheads, both refusing to give even an inch in an argument, and Salazar had ended up stomping away from the school and staying away for a few days just to cool his head down.

Such a thing had been common, especially since the four founders had been best friends and fellow apprentices ever since they were small children, having been apprenticed to Merlin's son himself, and knew each other well. All of them were close, like siblings. Godric and Salazar were extremely alike in character and personality, and have been the best of friends, brothers even. Thus, when Godric and Salazar had that argument that led to Salazar leaving the school in a huff, Rowena and Helga had even gone as far as to place bets to see how long it would take Salazar to calm down and return, even inviting a rather amused Riley to join in.

Hilda had laughed herself out of the seat that she had been sitting in at that time when Riley had told her the true version of Hogwarts' history with a straight face when the vampire had heard from Ethan that Hilda is attending Hogwarts School.

The time of the founders is also a time when the people of the Wizarding Communities knew how to keep their mouths shut, and their abilities hidden. That is also a time when the wizards and

witches of the land actually knew how to blend in with the Muggles, and could even pass off as one quite convincingly.

The wizards and witches knew to keep their mouths shut, and they would keep the important stuff in their hearts and wouldn't express them in words. The four founders especially felt that way. Thus, the 'history' of the four founders that are recorded in the book of Hogwarts: A History, that the people of that era had considered a collection of taboo words, are also a relic of such a spirit.

They have believed that either writing or speaking them will result in the loss of one's happiness. That had been what the people of that era had thought.

The telling of the history of the founders in the present time had also been a relic of such a belief in the past. Hence why Salazar Slytherin was even portrayed as nothing more than a pureblood loving Muggle Born hating wizard by historians.

Riley had been furious when he had learnt of how the wizards and witches had perceived Salazar Slytherin in the present time, as he had been rather fond of the young wizard then, seeing a lot of himself in Salazar. Even as much as Salazar had hated Muggles, which isn't too surprising, seeing as how Muggles killed his younger sister during a 'witch hunt', he wasn't cold blooded enough to want to murder all Muggles that think of anything magical as the product of Satan.

"An argument between Godric Gryffindor and Salazar Slytherin caused Slytherin to leave, but not before he built a Chamber of Secrets somewhere within the school that only his true heir would be able to open. Once the heir return to Hogwarts, he would then unleash the horrors within, and purge the school of all those whom Salazar Slytherin deemed unworthy to study magic." Professor McGonagall continued.

'Good thing that Riley isn't here.' Hilda thought with a wince, knowing just how short tempered that the nomad vampire is. He had a particularly short fuse with anyone who insulted people whom he respected and cared about. While that isn't a very long list, as far as Hilda is aware, Salazar Slytherin is the only human wizard whom Riley had respect for.

"Of course, the school has been searched several times, and no one has ever found the Chamber of Secrets." Professor McGonagall told the students.

There was silence for several moments before Hermione spoke up again. "Professor, did the legends ever said anything about just what kind of creature is being housed in the Chamber of Secrets?" she asked.

McGonagall looked uneasy for several moments as she cleared her throat before answering. "A monster," she said, a slight quiver in her voice that only Hilda was able to detect. "All right, get back to the lesson at hand please." She told the class sternly, and there were groans. "To transfigure an animal into a water goblet successfully..."

"So do you really think that the legend of the Chamber of Secrets is real?" Draco asked as all eight of them – Hilda, Hermione, Padma, Draco, Neville, Luna, Jasper and Cedric, were seated by a large pine tree near the Black Lake.

Hermione and Padma have just finished telling those who weren't in their Transfiguration class about the legend of the Chamber of Secrets that Professor McGonagall had just told them. And by now, the legend about the Chamber is spreading across the school extremely quickly, even for Hogwarts' standards.

"Yes, can't you tell?" Hilda asked, sitting with her back leaning against the tree trunk of the pine tree. Her eyes drifted over to the Black Lake for a few seconds, before turning her attention back to her friends. "McGonagall's worried. All the teachers are."

"And I heard from Dad that the Chamber of Secrets was opened once – about fifty years ago." Draco added his own input.

Everyone looked at Draco weirdly at this. Everyone but Hilda, that is.

"And your dad knows this because?" Jasper questioned.

Draco rolled his eyes in annoyance. "How the hell do I know?" he muttered sarcastically. "Anyway, I heard from him that the Chamber of Secrets was opened only once – about fifty years ago. And at that time, there were lots of attacks on Muggle Born students, and a girl died."



"I don't remember Hogwarts: A History actually saying anything about that." Cedric frowned thoughtfully to himself. Like almost everyone in the school, he had gone reading up on the Chamber of Secrets part after the attack on Mrs Norris.

Hilda sighed. "You wouldn't," she said. "The school actually took those pages out, as they were worried that the students might panic." She told them. She then frowned. "Also, the teachers at that time also believed in the Old Ways." She said mysteriously, dawning on what Riley had told her.

The time of Hogwarts' founders is a time when the people of the Wizarding Communities knew how to keep their mouths shut, and their abilities hidden. They also knew to keep the important stuff in their hearts and wouldn't express them in words. To this day, many witches and wizards still feel the same – particularly those old pureblood families who still remain stuck in the Old Ways.

"And just WHO opened the Chamber the last time?" Padma asked, annoyed.

"You're asking me?" Hilda asked, irritated. Padma recognised the danger signs immediately, and wisely kept her mouth shut. Hilda had been rather short tempered and irritable ever since the start of the school year. The attack with Mrs Norris had only made it worse.

"Well, it just seems like you know everything, that's all." Jasper joked, trying to lessen the atmosphere.

Hilda's lips twitched, trying not to laugh. "If you require a walking encyclopedia, Jasper, look to Hermione," she said politely, but sarcastically.

"And what is that supposed to mean, Hilda?" Hermione cried, and everyone laughed.

"Well, jokes aside, I'll have to ask Sirius or Remus about it during the Christmas holidays," said Hilda thoughtfully. "Maybe they'll know. But the current issue here is..." She trailed.

"The person who opened the Chamber." Hermione finished her sentence, and Hilda nodded. "Who do you think it is?"

Hilda shrugged. "I don't know," she admitted.

XXXXXX

Dinnertime that night at Hogwarts School found Hilda missing from her usual seat at the Ravenclaw table.

"Where's Hilda?" Cedric asked, blinking at Hilda's empty seat in between Hermione and Padma.

The two girls exchanged looks before sighing as one. "Probably skipping dinner." Padma stated. "She hasn't been eating much lately. Well... Not like she ate much usually, anyway. But it's true that she's been eating a lot less than she used to." She added.

"She's probably skipping dinner or something." Anthony Goldstein piped in from next to Hermione, leaning over and taking some mashed potatoes from the plate in front of Padma. "And with what she has to deal with the Gryffindors this year, I'm not surprised." He shot the Gryffindor table a sour look.

Ravenclaw House was not pleased with how Gryffindor House had been treating Hilda, and neither was Hufflepuff House for the matter – a house that prided themselves on their loyalty. Both Ravenclaw and Hufflepuff banded together against Gryffindor, and even some of the Slytherins had joined in – particularly those on relatively good terms with Draco and Hilda, like Blaise Zabini, Daphne Greengrass and Tracey Davis.

It had come to such a point that the tension between Gryffindor House and Ravenclaw House could be matched with the tension between Gryffindor and Slytherin.

"You both know where she is though, right?" Cedric asked Hermione and Padma, concern in his tone.

Both girls exchanged looks. "Well, she isn't in our dorm room or the common room, since we'd come from there before dinner..." Padma said uneasily. "And she's usually there..."

"She'll turn up, Cedric." Luna said suddenly, causing the others to jump, as they weren't expecting for Luna to speak up at all. In fact,

the only ones whom Luna would speak to so far are only Hilda and Neville, though she is slowly opening up to the others. "She always did."

Cedric sighed, getting up from the table, and taking a few slices of chicken with him as he did so. "Sorry, but I'll probably sit here and wonder all night where she is if I don't go and find her now," he admitted.

Draco tugged onto his arm before the caramel haired teen could leave however, and the Malfoy heir jerked onto Cedric's tie so that his head was level with his, nearly choking Cedric, much to his annoyance. Draco then whispered into his ear. "Try the top of the Astronomy Tower." Draco whispered, and winked at him.

Cedric nodded his thanks to the blonde, hiding his surprise that Draco actually knew where Hilda is, even though Hermione and Padma don't. And really, should he really be surprised at that? Draco had been Hilda's friend since early childhood after all, even before starting at Hogwarts.

The hallways of the school were quiet, even as Cedric took the shortest route that he knew of to get to the Astronomy Tower. He hoped fervently to himself that no professor would suddenly get it into their heads to do some patrolling of some sort, though it isn't lights out yet, and technically, students are still allowed to roam about the school. But with the recent Chamber of Secrets scare, the teachers aren't taking any chances.

Furthermore, several of the older students, especially those in sixth year and above usually found the Astronomy Tower to be a great place for 'making out'. Hence, whenever a Prefect found an empty bed or two in the dorms of the older students, they would usually know where to find them.

The only sounds that Cedric could hear are that of his footsteps as he climbed the Astronomy Tower, going all the way to the top. The caramel haired teen then opened the door, poking his head around it.

"Hilda, are you here?" he called out, immediately spotting the dark haired girl curled up against the cold stone wall of the Astronomy Tower, her back against the wall, her legs curled up beneath her.

She had a deck of cards by her side, with a few cards laid out before her, and she looked surprised to see Cedric.

"Dray told you where I am?" Hilda asked even as Cedric approached her, sitting down beside her.

"Kind of." Cedric admitted. "Hey, I was worried." He defended himself as Hilda looked at him weirdly. "It's the first time that you've actually missed dinner. Even if you don't eat anything, you usually just sat at the table and wait for the rest of us to finish."

"Well, I hardly eat anyway, so why bother going to dinner?" Hilda snorted.

Cedric was silent. He knew that as a half-vampire, Hilda doesn't have to eat as much as humans do. The amount of food that she does eat is only comparable to a simple snack for them. Cedric had often wondered to himself if Hilda ever feels hungry.

"So what are you doing up here?" Cedric asked. In answer, Hilda brought the deck of cards by her side to eye level. Bathed by the moonlight, Cedric recognised the worn looking deck of cards for what it was. "Tarot cards?"

Cedric had only ever seen the crazy Divination teacher at Hogwarts using tarot cards, and he hoped that Hilda doesn't suddenly start sprouting all the crazy stuff that the professor was known to sprout, judging from the stories that his classmates had told him.

"Not the wizard kind, Cedric." Hilda, almost as if reading Cedric's mind, told him. "My method of tarot card reading is the vampire method – the Old Way."

"Is there any difference?" Cedric asked, interested.

"Well, originally, tarot card reading originated from the Midnight Society." Hilda explained, shuffling the cards in her hands. "All the Muggle lore these days about tarot card reading are false. In fact, I'll be surprised if any human can get an accurate reading these days from tarot card reading. It's considered one of the most difficult arts to master. I only know it because Jessica taught me it ever since I was a kid." Hilda chuckled as she remembered when Jessica had given her a deck of tarot cards for a present when she was six years

old, much to Ethan's chagrin. "She's a High Priestess, and tarot reading is one of her skills."

"I...see..." Cedric said slowly, filing that information away mentally for future reference.

"It's more accurate at night though, especially on full moon nights." Hilda explained. Cedric blinked. So that explains why Hilda is currently sitting out here. "Probably why humans tend to use a crystal ball when doing tarot card reading. Probably as a replacement for a full moon." She sounded amused, and Cedric chuckled to himself.

"What are you trying to read?" Cedric asked Hilda.

The shuffling of the cards stopped for a moment before Hilda sighed, placing the deck of cards down by her side. She glanced at Cedric. "The future," she told him. "The unknown future."

She then cut the deck before placing it back together again in one deck. Cedric watched in interest as Hilda spread out the cards in a fan-like formation using her left hand. She then took out nine cards randomly using her left hand, placing them in a diamond-like formation on the ground in front of her. Three cards in a row in the middle. Two cards both above and below it. Then one single card at the top, and another at the bottom.

Cedric watched on silently. He would rather trust in Hilda's Divination skills than he does in the barmy Divination professor at Hogwarts. Furthermore, he can feel an aura of magic around those cards. Slowly, he then watched as Hilda flipped opened a few of the cards. One right at the top. The middle card in the row of three. Then the last card in the second last row.

Justice. The Lovers. The Tower.

"So... What does it mean?" Cedric asked carefully. "What were you asking for?" A sudden thought struck him. "The Chamber of Secrets?"

Hilda nodded, looking at him with a small smile on her face. "Also... About my own unknown future," she admitted, and Cedric looked confused. Hilda turned her attention back to the cards in front of her.

She touched the first card – Justice, with the tips of the fingers on her left hand. "Justice..." she whispered. "'To find the truth, throw away all preconceptions, and gather the facts. The truth...is just right before your eyes'."

The second card – The Lovers, was upside down. Cedric found his eyes drawn to it, even as Hilda touched the card with her fingertips seemingly hesitantly.

"The Lovers," she murmured. "Desire... Love... Union... Passion... Beliefs... Choices... Temptation..." She glanced at Cedric out of the corner of her eye before letting it fall back to the card. "Doubt..."

The final card – The Tower.

Looking at the card, Cedric felt uncomfortable at seeing the image of a falling man from a tower, even as lightning strikes it. It just seems...ominous somehow.

"Failure... Ruin... Catastrophe..." Hilda murmured. She glanced at Cedric. "The first and last cards give you the answers to the truth you seek. The second card gives you the answer to the unknown future." She said mysteriously. "The Tower... The truth you seek might not be one that you expect. And the choices that you make can either put things right, or let things fall to ruin..." She touched the card.

"And...the second card?" Cedric asked carefully. "The...Lovers? What were you asking for? What answers were you seeking, Hilda?" He prompted.

Hilda was silent for several moments before she picked up the cards slowly, placing them back together into one deck. "Unlike wizards, we vampires reached the age of maturity at sixteen, even for dhampirs – a part human part vampire being like myself." Hilda explained. Cedric nodded to show that he understood. "In other words, at the age of sixteen, we are officially adults, and we have to choose how to live our lives from then on."

"Is it difficult?" Cedric asked gently. "To choose?"

"Somewhat." Hilda admitted. "I only know one dhampir, and Nauhel is way older than me. He chose to live as a vampire." She stared at

the deck of cards in her hands. "I still have four years left to decide, but it doesn't make things any easier." She admitted. "I love my family. Ethan. Jessica. Eric. All the others... Even High Lord Elton. I want to stay with them." Cedric felt his heart clench painfully at this. "But I also like my friends. My human friends." She looked at Cedric, and he felt his heart soar. "You, Draco, Hermione, Neville, Padma, Jasper... All the others. I want to stay with you guys too. It isn't an easy choice to make." Hilda admitted. "Of course, the best choice would be to ask them if they want to become an Immortal. But I won't want to force the curse on them."

Cedric frowned. "What do you mean?" he asked, confused.

"Being an Immortal might sound wonderful to humans who have short life spans." Hilda said, and Cedric nodded to show that he is following. "But in reality, it isn't that wonderful. We see and experience things that normal humans won't experience. And we can't die by normal means. You live on and on, living through times, whilst everyone and everything around you either changes or dies. That's why we call it a cursed life." Hilda said, her lips quirking into a sad smile. "The Midnight Society is accustomed to that, especially the vampires. Humans who are turned into Immortals often can't get accustomed to it."

"I think that you underestimate their will, Hilda." Cedric said with a smile. "I can't speak for them, but I know that they like you. If only you'll just ask, they will agree to stay with you. All of us want to stay with you as much as you want to stay with us."

Hilda was silent before getting up with a sigh. "Let's talk about this another day," she said. "I should be getting back to the common room. Padma and Hermione will be looking for me otherwise."

Cedric nodded. "Yeah. Want me to walk you back?" he asked.

"No. I'll be fine," said Hilda with a small smile. "I'll see you tomorrow."

She waved at Cedric before leaving the Astronomy Tower. Cedric was silent for several moments, replaying the moment of when Hilda was 'reading' The Lovers card several minutes prior.

"Desire... Love... Union... Passion... Beliefs... Choices... Temptation..." Hilda glanced at Cedric out of the corner of her eye before letting it fall back to the card. "Doubt..."

"What is she doubting?" Cedric muttered to himself. He then stared at his clenched fist. "These feelings are not good to have, are they?" He murmured. "We might be good friends, but she is still vampire royalty." He sighed to himself, running his fingers through his windblown hair. "I love you." He whispered into the night wind.

A/N: So how is this for a long overdue chapter? This might not be up to my usual standard, so I apologise for this. I've played tarot cards a while ago when I was still in high school, so I thought about incorporating it into this story. The formation that Hilda had used is just one of the basic ones for the reading of the Major Arcana that I've used when I was starting out.

Anyway, about the Hogwarts founders' part, I mostly got the idea of it from 'Forging Destiny', a story written by White Angel of Auralon. Check it out if you hadn't read it. It's a really good one!

Anyway, things between Cedric and Hilda will be heating up soon, though as stated before, I'll be taking their relationship slow. I won't have them entering the romance department that soon. At least not until Hilda's fourth or fifth year at least. So do you want any others to 'join' her in immortality paradise?

Anyway, I hope that you like this chapter, and please read and review!



## Chapter Eighteen: Secret of the Night

Christmas rolled around, and Hilda Evans is in a very bad mood.

All of Ravenclaw House had been treading on eggshells around the dhampir for weeks now, ever since a certain professor had taken it upon himself and his wisdom to form a dueling club that had nearly gone horribly wrong. An attack on a Muggleborn student – a Gryffindor first year, had taken place nearly a month after the attack on Mrs Norris.

After that, lockdown rules were set in place, with the curfew for students being confined to their tower being at eight o'clock instead of the usual ten o'clock. No student is to wander around alone as well, and must go in pairs. The patrols around the school were also increased as a result.

Then a notice had been pinned up on the notice boards in every common room after that, informing the students about a dueling club being started because of the recent events. Hilda didn't want to go, but Hermione and Padma were interested in it, and had all but dragged their reluctant roommate out of their dorm.

It turns out that it's Lockhart who had started the dueling club, and Professor Snape had become his 'assistant' only to keep an eye on him, and to prevent him from endangering the students because of his 'spells'. The students were paired up to duel each other, and let's just say that it's a major disaster! Especially since Neville had somehow ended up being paired up with Ronald Weasley and his broken wand. If Hilda (who had paired up with Draco) hadn't been standing nearby, and had deflected Ron's spell with one of her own (vampiric magic), Neville will probably be sharing a room with his parents in St. Mungo's.

After that, a Hufflepuff Muggleborn by the name of Justin Finch-Fletchley and the Gryffindor ghost, Sir Nicholas have both ended up Petrified. It is the fact that a ghost had been Petrified that had made the students worry more.

Just what, as what everyone was asking their friends, could Petrify a ghost? Just what could harm someone that is already dead?

Like most of the students, Hilda had been looking forward to Christmas and going back home to see Ethan, Sirius and Remus, and all the others. Unfortunately however, Ethan had written to Hilda two days before Christmas, saying that he is sorry, but would Hilda mind staying at Hogwarts for Christmas, since there is some bad news over at the vampires' side, and by the looks of things, he might have to stay away from Starlight's Hall a bit longer.

From Hilda's letters that she'd received from Sirius and Remus, she knew that Ethan had hardly been around this year, as he is dealing with some crisis that Ethan had never explained, merely saying that 'it's a vampire problem'.

Furthermore, as what Ethan had stated in his letter, seeing as how some of Orlando's crazy followers had been running loose lately, and seeing as how she is one of the two that knew the exact rune pattern that had kept him sealed, it'll put his mind at ease if Hilda remains at school.

The vampire might not like Dumbledore, and the wards around the school might not be able to keep a vampire of considerable strength out, but it will warn the teachers if one is attempting to break in. Sure, Jessica is in danger too, but seeing as how she had been travelling around with Ethan lately to hunt down the rune patterns that kept Orlando sealed, she had been safe so far. Last that Hilda had heard from Ethan, the two childhood friends are heading to Tartarus on Mist Isle to visit some 'old friends'.

Tartarus is the prison for the Midnight Society, where once thrown in, they would not be able to escape, as the prison is basically located deep underground within the lava pits of an ancient volcano that had once existed on Mist Isle. The High Council of the Midnight Society had also gathered several of their most skilled magic users and had warded Tartarus and Mist Isle with several of the most powerful spells and wards that they had ever known, with the wards being renewed every few years. The members of the Midnight Society that are specifically used for guard detail took turns every few years to do their shifts at Mist Isle, as no one likes to stay at the prison for long.

It turns out that Ethan had actually written to Padma, Hermione, Neville, Cedric and Jasper, informing them of their situation, though leaving out the exact reason why he couldn't be at Starlight's Hall

this Christmas. And the vampire had also asked them if they would mind staying at Hogwarts this Christmas to keep Hilda company, as the vampire knew that Hilda didn't like being alone in Hogwarts because of a certain Headmaster. And the vampire knew that Hilda wouldn't dream of asking her friends to stay, and thus, had asked for Hilda.

As this is the first time that the Second Years are staying at Hogwarts for Christmas, they have agreed readily, though Neville will be away for three days at least from Hogwarts before returning to the school. He never said why either, and his friends, reading his mood, wisely decided not to ask.

Thus, Hilda is in a very bad mood, and on Christmas Day itself, one can find her in the Ravenclaw common room, trying to glare a hole through the envelope lying on the table in front of her.

Hermione and Padma were currently occupying a couch opposite the dark haired girl, with Jasper and Cedric taking the other one, with Draco sitting next to Hilda – something that his friends thought is either being very brave or extremely suicidal. The students have asked their Heads of Houses permission to spend their time or even spend their nights in the Ravenclaw Tower, seeing as how besides from them, the only ones to spend their Christmas in Hogwarts that year is only the Weasley family.

The friends have all opened their Christmas presents together in the Ravenclaw common room, and the loud squeal that Hermione had given out upon seeing Jasper's gift to her – a rare book consisting tales of the Midnight Society that is as close to the truth as could be, had nearly deafened all of them, poor Jasper especially who nearly had his air supply cut off when Hermione had hugged him tightly.

Hilda had several nice presents as well that did it's work in at least cheering up her a little.

Remus and Sirius had co-shared to give her their present together, giving her an exotic-looking paperweight that is 'snowing' inside, and even had little people inside skating on the frozen lake. Narcissa and Lucius have both given her a matching set of scarves and gloves in the colours of black and silver. Neville's grandmother had even given her something too, much to her surprise. Augusta Longbottom had given Hilda a book on rare tales and legends,

saying that Hilda studies too much in her opinion, and she could do with some relaxation.

Even Ethan and Jessica have sent her some presents, much to Hilda's surprise. From Jessica are two journals that she had explained are two-way journals. Whatever Hilda writes in the journal will appear on whoever has the other journal. The High Priestess even teasingly told Hilda to give it to someone whom she treasures above everything else.

From Ethan is a single silver earring with a moon pendant hanging from it, with a note from him, stating that he really should have given it to her during her thirteenth birthday, but Eric had said that it's all right for him to give it to her early, because of the whole business with Orlando. Ethan had also stated that the earring had protective amulets and charms on it, and could protect her. He had also given Hilda a bottomless black rucksack, stating that with the number of books that she likes to read, he is surprised that she hadn't started carrying it around with her yet.

Even Elton and Eric have given Hilda something too, much to the dhampir's surprise. From High Lord Elton is a black coat that he had explained is resistant to wear and tear, and would grow with her as she grows, also being able to protect her from most harmful spells and enchantments. On the coat sleeve of the left upper arm is the Nightwing clan's symbol. Eric had also given Hilda something 'family related', in this case, weapons.

There is even a short note from him.

'I know that Ethan didn't want you to bring your weapons with you to school. But with the business with Orlando and his followers, one can never be too sure. As a certain man is the Headmaster of the school that you're in, I had those weapons custom made by a master dwarf smith. If you concentrate enough magic into the swirling blue gems on the guns and sword, you will be able to shrink it down so that it takes on a pendant form that you can wear on your choker or your bracelet. This way, you will never be far away from your weapons, and you will not be left defenceless if you meet an enemy that you can't take down with magic. As we all knew, there are several enemies that we can't take down with magic, even vampire magic.

Stay safe, Hils, and Merry Christmas.

P.S. Father wants to know if you and Ethan could make it back in time for Ritual Night. He hadn't seen you both for nearly a full year at least, and he wants to see you.

-Eric'

Hilda had looked around at that, only to see that her friends aren't concentrating on her, and she had concentrated her magic into the twin ebony handguns and a beautifully crafted sword in the package that Eric had sent her, watching in disguised awe as it immediately shrank down into pendant forms. The dhampir had then attached those 'pendants' onto the silver bracelet that she wore around her left wrist.

Her friends had also given her some nice gifts.

Hermione had given her a hard-to-find book on runes that Hilda had been searching for some time, whilst Professor Snape gave her a rare book on Potions with a note, stating that that is the book that he had used when studying for his Potions' Mastery, and that Hilda should find it more useful than he does.

Like with all his Ravenclaws, Professor Flitwick had given Hilda a Chocolate Frog. Neville had given Hilda a strange looking plant with yellow stems and red flowers that produces a type of medication that works on virtually any illness – even poisons. Jasper had given her a box of Honeydukes' Sweets Assortment that contains virtually every kind of sweet in existence. From Draco is a set of new dragon hide gloves that Hilda is very pleased with, since the pair that she has at Starlight's Hall is getting worn out. Padma had given her a new pair of dragon hide boots, since, as she wrote in a short note, she doesn't know what to get Hilda that the others hadn't already given her. Alec, Hilda's vampire friend from Nightshades had given her a Viewer mirror, much to her surprise.

Viewer mirrors are pretty rare in the vampire world, as it can only be forged using fires from the flames of dragons and vampire blood. It can basically allows the user to see a person and what they are doing as long as they have a lock on their magical signature, and as long as they know where they are.

And finally...

Hilda's eyes widened when she unwrapped the last present that is wrapped with dark blue and silver wrapping paper, coupled with a smart silver bow. An ornament in the form of a simple crystal flower carved in the shape of a lily flower laid within the box that it came with. The crystal reflected several lights, making it look as if the lights were dancing around the flower. There is even a card that came with it.

Merry Christmas.

-Cedric

Cedric's gift probably had helped cheered Hilda up more than she cared to admit. Along with her friends, she even had a fabulous Christmas breakfast, admiring the Christmas decorations in the Great Hall. However, that good mood quickly dissipated when they returned to the Ravenclaw common room, and when an eagle-hawk had delivered Hilda a letter – an eagle-hawk that Hilda is rather familiar with by now.

Padma finally sighed as she watched Hilda passed the ten minute glaring mark.

"Did that envelope offend you or something, Hilda?" Padma asked sarcastically. "Who is it from? Ethan?"

"No," said Hilda sourly. "It's from Alec."

Cedric who had an amused grin on his face at the way that Hilda is acting, since he rarely sees her act like a child, usually more like an adult, quickly felt the grin on his face slide off at the mere mention of the vampire that he'd met only once at Ritual Night.

For some reason, he and Alec have never really gotten off on the correct footing, though Cedric suppose that it is really more on his end than on Alec. Alec always had this really amused grin on his face whenever he sees Cedric – like he knew something that the caramel haired teen doesn't know. Cedric had asked Draco about it once, but all that the blonde would do is giggle hysterically until he is in danger of passing out due to the lack of air.

Cedric had wisely decided to stop asking after that. In fact, he isn't sure if he even wants to know.

"Alec?" Draco blinked. "He's supposed to be at Nightshades, isn't he? Why is he writing to you?"

Hilda sighed. "I can't talk about it to you guys, but let's just say that it's bad news for the Midnight Society."

Her friends exchanged confused looks, and Hilda glanced at the letter on the table in front of her. Alec had written to her in vampire language – a language that all vampires and part vampires knew, and would use if they do not want any others to decipher their letters.

From what Alec had heard from Hilda and Draco about Dumbledore, he knew that the old wizard wants to poke his nose in everything, and Alec himself isn't impressed with the wizard either. Hence he wrote in vampire language to Hilda. Even if the letter was intercepted before reaching Hilda (he doubts that that will actually happen. His eagle-hawk will be more than happy to teach them just how sharp his talons are), no one will be able to read it.

'Hilda,

Bad news.

Erianna, one of the retainers for my father, brought him a message that Jessica had given him two days ago. You are aware that Jessica and Ethan have headed to Tartarus to visit some 'old friends', right?

Apparently, those 'old friends' are Shans and Lila, the vampire twins that have served Orlando during the Dark Era as one of his most faithful followers. Jessica didn't tell me too much. She just said that Ethan had a hunch to their plans, and dragged her off to Tartarus to confirm it.

Shans and Lila broke out of Tartarus a day before Jessica and Ethan arrived.

This news was kept silent because they're one of Orlando's followers, and one of the most dangerous. Jessica thinks that it's Lakra, as the guards told her that the wards and runes around the

cell where the twins are kept froze for about an hour, and Lakra is an expert in runes and wards. By the time the wards went back up, and the guards were checking everything to make sure that nothing is amiss, Shans and Lila are long gone.

Be careful, Hilda.

-Alec Silverstein

Like Lakra, Shans and Lila are one of Orlando's most devoted followers, and one of the most dangerous. Hilda had only seen them once, yet she had never actually faced them in combat, as she's just a kid then, and Ethan and Jessica were both powerful warriors and vampires in their own right.

Hermione looked curiously at Hilda before deciding to change the subject. "So...about the attacks on the school," she said, turning towards her friends. That did the trick, since Hilda immediately focused her attention on Hermione. "What do you think is going on?"

"Well, if the legend about the Chamber of Secrets is to be believed, then whoever the Heir is, he or she is ridding the school of all Muggleborns," said Padma with a shrug.

"I don't know. It's just weird though," said Hilda with a frown. "Something seems off about this whole Chamber business. I just can't put my finger on it." She rubbed her temples, and her friends watched her. All of them knew that Hilda is extremely sharp and intuitive, and extremely shrewd. Maybe something to do with her vampire blood. If she says that something seems weird, then it most likely is. "And with the recent spider scare, everything seems weird."

Her friends exchanged amused grins.

Apparently, all the spiders in the school had decided that they could do with a vacation, and had decided to leave the school. Lockhart had gotten the shock of his life when Lee Jordan's tarantula had crawled over his foot to get out via one of the windows. If there is such a thing as a girly-man shriek, then Lockhart had just broken all records for it. And since then, no one can find any spiders in the school at all. And with everything that has happened with the vampires' side, Hilda couldn't possibly write to Ethan or Jessica to ask them about it.



"But with the Christmas break, maybe the teachers can figure out who it was." Padma said hopefully, and Hilda snorted. Like Ethan and most of the vampires, Hilda doesn't put much faith in the common sense of the British wizards.

"Yeah, that'll be the day." Cedric said disbelievingly. "Hilda almost got arrested for the Chamber business. If we hadn't been there, vouching for her, and if she hadn't been with Professor Snape all day, then I think they definitely would. I thought that it's 'innocent until proven guilty'? Seems like it's the other way around – 'guilty until proven innocent'." He snorted, and Hermione, Padma, Draco and Jasper all exchanged looks. Looks like Cedric haven't forgiven the teachers for nearly accusing Hilda for the Chamber business.

"Well, let's just wait and see," said Hilda with a sigh. "Whoever the Heir is, they are bound to slip up. And when they do, we'll be on the trail. I don't like being accused for something that I didn't do anymore than you do, Cedric."

"So we wait." Padma supplied, and Hilda nodded.

"We wait."

XXXXXX

Christmas didn't seem to have the effect at cooling down the students' heads. If anything, it only seemed to make things worse.

Anthony Goldstein and Michael Corner actually lost their tempers nearly two entire months after Christmas when they happened to overhear the usual Gryffindor gang (Ronald Weasley, Seamus Finnegan and Dean Thomas) insulting Hilda and going on the usual old story about the whole Chamber business.

The next thing that anyone knew is that all three Gryffindors were admitted into the Hospital Wing for two weeks for hexes and curses that actually took Madam Pomfrey two weeks to take off. Anthony and Michael got fifty points docked off Ravenclaw House for fighting and two weeks of detention scheduled with McGonagall, but as they reassured Hilda later on in Potions class, it was worth it.

The tension between Ravenclaw House and Gryffindor House had actually escalated to new levels, and the rivalries between the two houses soon reached the same proportion as Gryffindor versus Slytherin. Not that Hufflepuff and Slytherin were all that pleased with just how Gryffindor House were treating Hilda, though the Slytherins didn't show it all that much unless your name is Draco Malfoy.

Hilda herself though, is getting very annoyed.

She can usually tune out all the insults sent her way by the Gryffindors. Heavens knows that she got enough practice during the holidays, and even before she had attended Hogwarts. The people of Diagon Alley aren't overly fond of her and the other citizens of Knockturn Alley where she lives and works.

But what she can't ignore is that the same treatment is extended to her friends as well. Sweet natured Neville who no one had ever seen getting angry before actually hexed Ronald Weasley when the redhead had hexed Luna when her back is turned. An angry Augusta Longbottom actually Flooed to Hogwarts when she received an owl from Neville about this. No one knew what had actually transpired in the Headmaster's office, but the ghosts have stated that Augusta had yelled loud enough at the Headmaster that it could even be heard down in the dungeons, though that could be just an exaggeration on their parts.

Cedric and Jasper, both being Fourth Years, could take care of themselves just fine, and no one dared to target them anyway, as they are one of the more popular boys in the school. And no one in their right mind would target Hermione and Padma, as they both knew most spells that are actually Fourth Year curriculum. As for Draco, enough said.

Thus, even though they can't target them with spells and hexes, they do it with mean talk and nasty rumours.

Thus, it is with a tense atmosphere when they approached the Quidditch match of Hufflepuff versus Gryffindor.

Cedric and Hilda have actually been in the library on that day a few hours before the match, as Hilda wanted to research something for homework that Professor Flitwick had actually set them to do, and

Cedric had come because he insisted that there is something that he wanted to read up on.

Come to think of it, there is always at least one other person with Hilda at all times ever since the Christmas holidays had ended, even to the bathroom, much to her annoyance. But Hilda had put up with it, since she knew that it puts the minds of her friends at ease. And she'll rather have Padma and Hermione shadowing her everywhere than facing six worriers all day.

As Hilda read up on the charm that Professor Flitwick had told them about, and had found a few other books that had similar charms to it, she then glanced at her watch and found that there is still an hour left before the match. And since Cedric is the Hufflepuff Seeker, he can't afford to be late.

Closing the book that she had, and picking another two books with her, Hilda walked down a few aisles before finding Cedric at the magical creatures' books' section, engrossed in the book that he was reading.

"Cedric?" The caramel haired boy almost jumped about a foot in the air and turned to face Hilda almost guiltily, closing the book that he was reading quickly. But not quickly enough for Hilda's standards, as her sharp eyes noted the page number that he was on and what seemed to be a graphic illustration of what must be some kind of giant snake. "We should leave now if you want to make it in time for the match."

"Oh, is it time already?" Cedric glanced at his watch. "So it is." He then smiled at Hilda. "Well, let's check these books out and let's go."

"What book is that?" Hilda asked curiously as she looked at the tome tucked under Cedric's arm.

"Well, you know..." Cedric coughed, looking a little guilty. He tried shifting the tome subtly to avoid Hilda's attention, but unfortunately for him, it works the other way around. "Just some light reading on my own."

"Really?" Hilda drawled, looking disbelievingly as Madam Pince took the three books that she had taken, and started checking it out for her. Ravenclaws have a privilege of checking out up to fifteen books

per week as long as they return it within a month, since Madam Pince is well aware of the fact that all Ravenclaws seem to breathe and live books like it's part of them.

Cedric's excuse might work for a Ravenclaw, since 'a bit of light reading' for them usually equals to a tome that is nearly as thick as a dictionary. Just look at Hermione's collection of books in their dorm. While Cedric is a good and hardworking student, not even he would borrow a thick tome like that for 'a bit of light reading'.

"Yeah, really." Cedric said firmly as he gave the librarian the book that he had under his arm that had the picture of a Chimera on the front cover. It only took a few moments before both of them were walking away from the library, heading towards the Quidditch pitch.

"Want me to hold onto that for you?" Hilda asked, gesturing towards the tome, as they took a short cut to the Quidditch pitch that Hermione, Hilda and Padma have discovered in their second week of school when they got lost coming back from the library. "It's your game today. Or I can pass it to Jasper for you later on. We're meeting at the Hufflepuff bleachers anyway."

"Oh no, it's all right. I can put it in my locker in the changing rooms," said Cedric with a smile as they neared the entrance of the pitch.

Hilda gave a small smile before she stopped suddenly in her tracks, her eyes wide as she looked around her, specifically at the walls.

"What's wrong?" Cedric asked, confused.

"The voice... I just heard it again," said Hilda, looking around, her hair flying wildly around as her head whipped from side to side. 'Just what is it? What is that voice?'

Cedric's eyes narrowed in confusion before his eyes widened in realisation. "I think I just understood something," he said. "Where's Hermione?"

"Huh? Well, she was saying that she'll be heading back to the common room to get something at breakfast," said Hilda, confused.

"Okay. Hilda, head to the Quidditch pitch first. I'll let you know what I've figured out later. I can't be certain yet. That's why I need Hermione's opinion on this."

"Huh?" Hilda was more confused than ever. "Cedric, your match is starting soon! Your team is going to kill you if you don't show up!"

"I'll be right back!"

And before Hilda could even do or say anything, the caramel haired teen was gone, shooting off like a bullet towards the direction of the Ravenclaw common room.

"What in the world?" Hilda muttered to herself before she shook her head and headed towards the Quidditch pitch. If Cedric is going to be late, she might as well inform the Hufflepuff Captain before he kills Cedric.

As predicted, the Hufflepuff Captain wasn't pleased and muttered something about 'making Diggory do squats until his legs falls off', much to his team's amusement, though they were worried too, as the game will start in ten minutes, and their Seeker isn't even here yet!

The door to the Hufflepuff changing room swung opened just then, and an ashen faced Jasper stood there, with an equally pale looking Padma, Neville and Draco standing beside him.

"What is it, Summers?" The Hufflepuff Captain asked Jasper. "Have you seen Diggory?"

"No, we've came to get Hilda," said Jasper, looking so pale that it looks as if he would faint at any moment. Not that Padma, Neville and Draco are any better. He turned towards Hilda, panic visible in his blue eyes. "It's Cedric and Hermione. They've been Petrified."

Hilda almost had her heart in her mouth as she followed the Deputy Headmistress to the Hospital Wing with her friends close behind her.

Because of the recent attack, McGonagall had cancelled the Quidditch match, and had sent all the students back to their dormitories, and had issued a full lockdown. The strict tone that the witch had used had ensured that no student would be disobeying

her orders that day. After that, the Deputy Headmistress had ushered Hilda, Padma, Neville, Draco and Jasper with her to the Hospital Wing.

Madam Pomfrey, the school's nurse was going back and forth between two beds, a concerned look on her face. On the right bed laid a familiar bushy haired girl that Padma gave out a sob at, and Neville paled even further. The look on Jasper's face is a cross between worry and anger. Draco said nothing, but the look on his face spoke what he is thinking.

And on the left bed is...

Hilda almost stopped breathing at this, and McGonagall actually has to hold the dark haired girl up, as the stern witch is sure that she would have fallen to the ground if she had not. The Deputy Headmistress is fond of Hilda and Hermione, two of the best students in the school, and she had a soft spot for Cedric Diggory who always took it upon himself to help the younger students in the school, not just the Hufflepuffs.

One have to be blind to not see the attraction that Hilda and Cedric had for each other, which must make nearly three-quarters of the school.

"Cedric..."

Hilda felt anger that she had never felt before surged in her even as she sat down next to the caramel-haired teen, reaching out and touching his hand. Like with the other Petrified victims, his hand was stiff beneath her touch, and Hilda saw red then.

Whoever the Heir is, or whoever that had opened the Chamber and had been attacking Hogwarts had just made the last mistake that they ever could. They'd just attacked the wrong person.

"We found the both of them near the Ravenclaw common room." McGonagall told the distraught students gravelly but gently, as all five of them looked as if they were about to fall apart. Jasper in particular was staring at Hermione as if half expecting for her to wake up at any moment. "Mr Diggory in particular had this with him." She took a thick tome from the table next to Cedric's bed, and Hilda recognised it as the book that Cedric had checked out from the

library earlier. "And Ms Granger has this with her." She picked up a small hand mirror next to the tome. "I don't suppose any of you knew what they were doing with these?" McGonagall asked, and Hilda shook her head. The stern witch sighed. "Come on, I'll escort all of you back to your common rooms. Your Heads of Houses will then tell you what you have to do next."

"Because of the recent attacks on the school, several new rules will be reinforced." Professor Flitwick told the crowded Ravenclaw common room in his squeaky-like high voice, reading from a scroll that he had with him. "No student will be allowed out alone. If you must go out of the Tower, you are to go either in pairs or threes, preferably with a Prefect. You will also not go to your classes alone. All teachers are to escort the students to their classes." Professor Flitwick sighed, suddenly looking extremely old. "I don't think that I have to tell you that if something isn't done soon, and if the person behind the attacks on the school isn't found, then Hogwarts will be closed forever. If any of you know anything at all, I beseech you to come forward and tell us." Professor Flitwick then rolled the parchment up and left the common room, with the portrait closing behind him as he did so.

The murmurs in the common room started up almost immediately, and Padma looked at Hilda, ashen faced. "This isn't good," she said. "We really need to find who the attacker is now."

Hilda nodded silently, looking down at the tome that had been found next to Cedric when he had been found Petrified. She had flipped through the pages of the book briefly, finding that it is an advanced book on magical creatures and their characteristics, usually used for Seventh Year study. But as it isn't dangerous in the least, it isn't shelved in the Restricted Section.

"I wonder what Hermione had found out though. And what is with the mirror?" Padma asked.

Hilda sighed. "Come on, up to our room," she said. "We need somewhere private to talk."

Padma nodded, and the two girls then slinked past their chattering Housemates who weren't happy in the least that one of their own had just been Petrified, and the attacker hadn't been found yet, nor has there been any clues whatsoever pointing to their identity.

Padma followed Hilda into their dorm room, and closed the door behind them, putting up a Silencing Charm as she did so. If anyone happens to be listening at the door, they wouldn't be able to hear a thing.

Padma sighed sadly as she looked at Hermione's empty bed.

There were an odd number of girls in their year, and thus, there are only three girls in their dorm room instead of the usual four. As a result, they were given the smallest dorm room, but the three girls didn't mind, and all of them have loved their room, as it had a view of the courtyard, and even the Black Lake.

Now however, the room just seems so empty and big without Hermione there.

"Knowing Hermione, she must have found out who or what had been attacking the school," said Hilda, sitting down on her bed and leaning against the bed rest. Padma sat down at the end of Hilda's bed. "I was with Cedric before the attack. I happened to mention something to him, and he shot off like a bullet towards the Ravenclaw common room to get Hermione. He said something about confirming his suspicions with her. You were with Hermione, weren't you?" Hilda asked Padma. "Did you see Cedric at all?"

"Yeah, we were coming out of the common room when Cedric popped up," said Padma. "He said that he needed to talk to Hermione, and he seemed a little excited about it too. Thus, I said that I'll head down to the Quidditch pitch first, and Hermione said that she'd join up with me later. If only I had stayed with her..." She muttered unhappily.

"Then you would have gotten Petrified as well." Hilda supplied. "Now isn't the time for wallowing in self-misery, Padma."

Padma glanced at her friend and was a little taken aback to see a steely glint in Hilda's eyes. Make no mistake, the dark haired girl is pissed. Whoever the attacker is, he or she had just done a very stupid thing in attacking Hilda's best friend and the person who is the most important to her.



"Right." Padma muttered. "But how are we going to find out who the attacker is though? Everyone who has ever seen the attacker or the attack ends up Petrified."

"All right, let's go through what we know so far one more time," said Hilda tiredly. "The first attack was on Mrs Norris at Halloween. That was when the writing on the wall appeared, and the whole Chamber of Secrets scare started circulating around the school."

"Then the little first year got Petrified next after the Quidditch match between Gryffindor and Slytherin." Padma piped up, and Hilda nodded. "After that was the attack on Justin and Sir Nick. Then Cedric and Hermione."

Hilda frowned. "Didn't Jasper say something about the spiders of the castle acting really weirdly when the attacks started?" she asked.

"Yeah, something about the spiders all deciding to 'take vacation' or something." Padma frowned. "And come to think of it, I hadn't seen any spiders around lately at all. And they used to be everywhere. Filch used to complain about it, I recall."

Hilda frowned. "Well, if we can't get our answers in the school, then I say we go outside it," she said carefully.

Padma frowned. She knows that look on Hilda's face. Whenever she had that look on, she is plotting something dangerous. "What are you thinking now?" she almost groaned. "I know that look on your face. You're thinking something dangerous."

Hilda was hesitant. "Well, it is going to be dangerous maybe. But it's for you, and not for me," she said carefully. "I am still part vampire, Padma. The creatures in the Forbidden Forest won't hurt me. If we can't find our answers in the school, then I say that we ask them."

Padma looked as if she is about to have a stroke. "T-The Forbidden Forest?" she nearly screeched. "Are you crazy?"

"We have no choice," said Hilda with a sigh. "We have to wait until the rest of the House falls asleep before we go. I'd rather not get caught out of bed, with the current situation."

"I'll be surprised if anyone can catch you." Padma snorted, knowing of Hilda's ability to blend in with the shadows. "Fine, I'll go with you. What about the others?"

Hilda hesitated. "I don't know. If we can get them on the way, then I suppose that they can come with us. I'll rather not waste any time. And I'm already taking a big risk by taking you with me. The beings that I'm thinking of aren't exactly friendly with humans."

"I would be very surprised if I don't find Jasper or Drake, or even Neville waiting outside the Ravenclaw common room for us." Padma snorted. "They're all pissed off. Whoever the attacker is, they just made the worst mistake of their lives."

XXXXXX

True to Padma's word, they did find Jasper, Draco and Neville waiting outside the Ravenclaw common room for them, hiding behind the suits of armour that stood near the entrance of the common room so that any patrolling Prefects and teachers wouldn't see them.

In fact, Jasper looked very annoyed when the two girls came out at last well past midnight.

"Finally! I thought that you'd never come out!" Jasper hissed.

"Sorry. It took awhile for our Housemates to fall asleep." Padma apologized. "How did things go on your end?"

"Well, Sprout gave the same speech that probably, your Heads of Houses did." Jasper answered. "But apart from that, nothing. Several of the younger years were really upset however, and some of the older years have to comfort them."

"Professor Snape gave the same speech about the new rules," said Draco with a shrug. "But he took me aside after that to tell me that the Minister came by with Dad. Apparently, the idiot Minister wanted to make it look as if he is doing something, and had Dumbledore suspended because of the attacks, and he had Hagrid the Horribly Clueless locked up in Azkaban, accusing him for being behind the attacks."

"What?"

"Damn, I don't like Dumbledore anymore than Lucius do, but having Dumbledore out of the castle do not work in our favour at all!" Hilda huffed. "I would be surprised if there isn't an attack a day with him gone!"

"And Hagrid behind the attack?" Jasper repeated incredulously. "Is the Minister insane?"

Draco huffed in annoyance. "He wants to make it look like he's doing something," he said.

"But Hagrid being behind the attacks? It's impossible," said Padma with a scoff.

Hilda sighed. "None of you are to repeat this to anyone else," she said sternly, and her friends looked bewildered but nodded. "You know that I tend to spend time in the Forbidden Forest every now and then?" All of them nodded. It is common knowledge only to them, as the teachers would probably get a stroke if they learn of Hilda's 'nightly excursions' into the Forbidden Forest. "I sometimes talk with the inhabitants of the Forbidden Forest. One of them told me about the incident fifty years ago when the Chamber was first opened, and a girl died. Apparently, the Ministry thought that they'd gotten the culprit at that time, as when he was expelled, the attacks stopped. The person who they'd expelled at that time was Hagrid."

"What?"

"But he would never—" Jasper spluttered.

"That's right, it wasn't him." Hilda interrupted. "I don't like him, but I refuse to believe that he is the one attacking the students. That's why we're going to find the person whom I'd spoken to about the Chamber in the Forest. But I need you guys to be careful if you're coming with me. The Forest isn't a friendly place, especially at night."

"I must be crazy to even agree to this." Neville grumbled as he tripped over another protruding tree root and he would have done a face plant to the ground if Padma hadn't grabbed him by the arm. "Hilda, are we there yet?"

"Just a little more," said Hilda who is at the fore of the group, with Jasper being at the back. "Just take care not to get separated. If you do, you'll never leave alive."

That made both Padma and Neville pale, and they took care to follow Hilda closely. So closely that several times, they almost stepped on Hilda's foot, much to her annoyance. The five friends navigate their way through the dark forest, with Padma marveling absently at how Hilda could see where she is going, even in the dark. And for some strange reason, none of the inhabitants of the Forest seem to even want to attack them.

Further and further into the forest they went until the trees almost blocked out any view of the night sky that they could see, leaving only pitch black darkness, and Draco, Padma, Neville and Jasper have to hold onto each other's shoulders, with Padma holding onto Hilda, just so that they don't get separated or lost.

Finally, Hilda stopped when they arrived at a large clearing in the middle of the Forbidden Forest, with a small space in the treetops above them that had a view of the sky, giving them some light at where they are.

Several strange looking silver flowers grew on the forest bed, with it glowing with a strange light. And a small lake could be seen in the middle of the clearing, though it is really more of a pond.

"You have to be careful." Hilda whispered as she approached the edge of the lake and knelt down next to it. Her friends followed her actions. "They aren't fond of humans. Don't get deceived by their innocent looks."

"Who lives here?" Draco asked, but Hilda didn't answer.

Instead, she turned towards the lake and started making a strange noise in her throat that seems to be a mix between low whistling and a low clicking sound. Her three friends stared at Hilda with awe, as her red-blue eyes seemed to morph into that of a low electric blue that almost glowed in the night.

A light splash from the lake caused the four of them to turn their heads towards the water, and Hilda smiled lightly as she saw three

heads that appeared from the water, swimming gracefully towards her, their naked voluptuous bodies almost glowing ethereally in the night.

"They're here."

"Are those...Sirens?" Jasper asked with interest.

He had only seen these creatures in his books for Care of Magical Creatures.

It is said that these creatures are kind of the cousins of mermaids, though much more vicious, as they would simply love an excuse to drown any unsuspecting sailor that happens to be sailing through their domains. They are dangerous creatures, taking on the forms of beautiful women with enchanting music and voices to lure unsuspecting sailors. Most Sirens usually lived on small islands that are surrounded by cliffs and rocks however, as they used the layout of their homes to their advantage by causing sailors to crash onto those cliffs and rocks.

Horrible way to die.

This is actually the first time that Jasper had actually seen one for himself, and he is surprised that they've actually built their home here, as this is the middle of the forest, with hardly anyone passing through.

"Aren't they sweet?" Padma said dreamily.

Hilda gave Padma a look that suggested that she had just grown two new heads. And by the looks that the three boys were giving her, they were obviously thinking the same.

"They will sweetly drown you if you aren't careful." Hilda warned before turning towards the middle Siren who is obviously the leader, and the dhampir made the same clicking noise that she had made earlier, with the leader Siren responding in kind.

The two other Sirens with her swam slowly towards Padma. One of them smiled at Padma, showing rows of sharp teeth, even as she took Padma's hand into her hand. Padma shivered a little at the coldness and how clammy that the hand feels. Slowly, the Siren

lowered Padma's hand into the water of the lake until it is submerged up to her wrist.

All of a sudden, Padma felt a hand on her shoulder and turned in time only to see Hilda by her side, and the dhampir snarled at the two Sirens who snarled back, hissing at Hilda before the Siren reluctantly let go of Padma. With a splash, the three Sirens then disappeared back into the water.

"Well, she told me quite a tale," said Hilda, glancing at her friends, not releasing her hold on Padma's shoulder. "I'll tell you what she told me as we head back to the school."

Her friends nodded as they got up as one and headed back the way they came, once again playing a game of 'Blind Men's Buff'.

"It is true that Hagrid was expelled fifty years ago because the Headmaster at that time and even the Minister mistakenly assumed that he was the one that had opened the Chamber. A Slytherin Prefect was the one that had turned him in, as he found out that Hagrid is raising a monster that was dubbed by the Hogwarts' populace at that time as 'the Monster of Slytherin'." Hilda explained.

"But what is that monster?" Neville asked. "And we know that Hagrid didn't open the Chamber."

"Right. That's what that Siren said too. She said that Hagrid's 'pet' at that time was an Acromantula – a giant spider that is capable of speech, and is capable of growing up to thirty feet at least."

Jasper paled, and Neville and Padma looked as if they were about to faint. Draco merely looked a little disgusted. An Acromantula as a pet? Is Hagrid insane?

"The Slytherin Prefect turned Hagrid in as the culprit, but no one found the Acromantula that he'd named Aragog. The Siren told me that this Aragog spoke to her often when he first fled into the Forbidden Forest before Hagrid found him a mate, and before he had his family, and when he is actually small enough to move around freely in the forest. The Muggleborn girl who had died as a result of the attacks had died in a bathroom. The Siren told me that Aragog had claimed at that time that he never hurt anyone as a favour to Hagrid."

"So he says. But how do we know that that is true?" asked Draco with a snort.

"Actually, Acromantulas don't Petrify." Jasper interrupted. "They only poison or eat living beings alive. So in a way, just having an Acromantula as a pet proves Hagrid's innocence."

Neville and Padma looked rather green at that.

"Right. I asked the Siren whether she knew of the creature that is attacking the students now," said Hilda, glancing over her shoulder to look at her friends. "She said no, but that Aragog knew what it was. And when she had asked him about it, Aragog grew very angry and said that his kind do not speak of it."

"That means it's very bad then," said Jasper, and everyone nodded.

"Yeah. But at least that rules out any creature that lives in the Forest to be behind the attack," said Hilda with a sigh. "Well, we're nearly out. I can see the lights of the school."

And so they were.

They were soon out of the forest in five minutes, with Neville huffing and puffing and swearing that he is not stepping into the forest ever again! The five of them then went their separate ways, heading back to their individual common rooms, counting themselves lucky that the teachers did not catch them.

Padma fell asleep almost instantly the moment that her head touches her pillow, but Hilda could not get to sleep at all. She tossed and turned and even threw her bedclothes off, but it doesn't help much at all.

Finally, Hilda opened her eyes to face the ceiling, pondering on the mystery plaguing the school – a certain Chamber of Secrets and the mysterious attacker, pondering on the finer points of the mystery as she wondered if there is anything that she'd overlooked.

And the voices.

Yeah, that. Just why is it that she'd been hearing voices now when she is fine the year before? And why just her alone? And every single time that she'd heard that mysterious voice, someone always ends up Petrified.

'Just what creature can Petrify people?' Hilda wonders. 'Well, a Medusa can, but they don't live in Britain. And it's impossible for one to be able to sneak into the school without the teachers realising, and even I would have noticed it if one is in the school. And a Medusa don't just Petrify their victims. They turn them to stone. And the voice that I'd been hearing seems to be...hissing? Like a snake?' Hilda frowned. 'And Ethan told me once that all vampires understood the language of non-humans. It is part of what we are, as vampires are considered the masters of the night. Hissing... Language...' Hilda's eyes sprang opened as a sudden thought entered her head. 'It can't be...!'



## Chapter Nineteen: Clash Between the Night

Hilda changed the flowers in the vase silently, with the rest of her friends sitting around Cedric and Hermione's bedsides.

If Ravenclaw House thought that Hilda's mood is already bad enough during the month before Christmas, and even after it, then they hadn't seen anything yet. Unlike Hermione or even Padma's fiery tempers when enraged, Hilda's temper is more...cold. Like that of a blizzard, and she can really make one feel like their life is in danger when she loses it.

And with Cedric and Hermione being the latest victims, everyone is practically tiptoeing around her, careful not to get on her bad side. Even the Gryffindors were wary of her, since this is not the Hilda Evans that they were used to picking on. This Hilda feels almost...dangerous. Like she could be unleashed at any moment.

Privately, Padma almost feels pity for the predator. Almost. Whoever they are, they have no idea what they're in for.

"Wish you are here, 'Mione." Padma whispered to her best friend, rubbing her thumb on the back of Hermione's hand. "We need you. More than ever."

"Professor Sprout said that the Mandrakes are nearly ready." Jasper told the girls. "They'll wake up soon. And even if we can't figure out who it is, once they wake up, they can tell us."

There was silence for several moments.

"I just don't get it," said Neville at last, looking at his friends. "There have been five attacks on students already. And it happened in the hallways of the school. Shouldn't someone have seen something at least? At least, the portraits or even the ghosts?"

"Actually, I heard that they are the first ones that the teachers asked when the attacks first begun." Draco answered. "But it doesn't have much use, as there aren't any portraits where the attacks have occurred, and the ghosts didn't even see anything."

Padma sighed, looking at Hilda. "So what now?" she asked.

Hilda was silent for several moments, looking at Cedric's unmoving form. Draco watched her carefully. He knew that look on Hilda's face; it's the look that she always had whenever she's thinking furiously about something.

"Cedric and I were heading to the Quidditch pitch from the library when I mentioned something to him, and he then shot off to get Hermione to confirm his doubts with her or something," said Hilda slowly. "And before that, he was acting really weirdly with a book that he had checked out. When I asked him about it, he said that he was borrowing it for 'a bit of light reading'." Hilda took the book from the table next to Cedric – she had taken the habit of carrying it almost everywhere with her ever since the attack. "It's an advanced book on magical creatures. It's for Seventh Year study at least." She explained, flipping through the thick tome.

"Maybe Cedric was looking up just what kind of creature or monster could be attacking the students?" Neville suggested.

Hilda's eyes widened in realisation for a moment before narrowing itself in deep thought.

She had never thought of that possibility before. Had Cedric being Petrified really shook her up that much? Just what kind of Hunter is she?

"Cedric?" The caramel haired boy almost jumped about a foot in the air and turned to face Hilda almost guiltily, closing the book that he was reading quickly. But not quickly enough for Hilda's standards, as her sharp eyes noted the page number that he was on and what seemed to be a graphic illustration of what must be some kind of giant snake. "We should leave now if you want to make it in time for the match."

"Page 506..." Hilda murmured to herself, and her friends exchanged confused looks as Hilda immediately turned her attention back to the book.

Vampires' memories have always been better than most humans, and Hilda is no exception. She can always remember a page that she had read only once, and could remember most spells with ease. Neville had often envied this ability of hers.

Hilda started flipping through the book before she found the page that she wanted – the page that she had seen Cedric reading in the library that day.

"This is the page that Cedric had been reading in the library that day." Hilda showed the book to her friends who all crowded around her to read the text on the page. There was a graphic illustration of a fearsome looking snake with the fangs bared, and the heading was 'King of the Serpents, the Basilisk'.

"A basilisk?" Jasper repeated. "There hasn't been one seen in Britain for over four hundred years!"

"Of the many fearsome beasts and monsters that roam our land, there is none more curious or more deadly than the basilisk, also known as the King of Serpents. This snake, which may reach a gigantic size and live up to hundreds of years, is born from a chicken's egg hatched beneath a toad. It's methods of killing are most wondrous, as aside from its deadly and venomous fangs, the basilisk has a murderous stare, and all who are fixed with the beam of its eye shall suffer instant death. Spiders flee before it, for it is their mortal enemy. The basilisk only flees from the crowing of the rooster that is fatal to it'." Hilda read the text from the book, and her eyes lit up immediately, the last pieces of the puzzle falling into place. "Cedric, you sly dog... So that's what this is all about!"

"What?"

Hilda didn't answer her friends. Instead, she thought furiously, trying to recall the events of the past year, specifically after the Chamber had been opened, and when the attacks on the students of the school have started.

Hilda frowned. "Didn't Jasper say something about the spiders of the castle acting really weirdly when the attacks started?" she asked.

"Yeah, something about the spiders all deciding to 'take vacation' or something." Padma frowned. "And come to think of it, I hadn't seen any spiders around lately at all. And they used to be everywhere. Filch used to complain about it, I recall."

"Spiders flee before it, for it is their mortal enemy'." Hilda muttered, seemingly to have forgotten about her friends.

"Right. I asked the Siren whether she knew of the creature that is attacking the students now," said Hilda, glancing over her shoulder to look at her friends. "She said no, but that Aragog knew what it was. And when she had asked him about it, Aragog grew very angry and said that his kind do not speak of it."

"That means it's very bad then," said Jasper, and everyone nodded.

"Hilda?" Padma voiced, suddenly concerned about Hilda's sanity.

"Cedric and Hermione have gotten it figured out for us," said Hilda, turning to face her friends, a strange glint in her eyes. "The creature in the Chamber of Secrets is a basilisk. And this text proves everything that had been happening so far." She jabbed a finger down at the text that they've been reading about the Basilisk.

"A basilisk?" Neville turned green. "You're trying to tell me that there's a giant snake that's been living down in the school for who knows how long?"

"Yeah, look here. 'Spiders flee before it'," said Hilda, jabbing her finger at the line. "That's why all the spiders in the school have been acting strangely ever since the attacks. The basilisk is their common enemy. That's why Hagrid's Acromantula refuses to even speak its name to the Siren. The basilisk is a creature that spiders feared above all others! Why the hell didn't I think of it sooner?"

Hilda was furious with herself for overlooking this. Out of all her friends, she should have thought about a basilisk first, since she knew more about the path of the night more than anyone else, given the fact that she had been raised with vampires.

"The basilisk only flees from the crowing of the rooster that is fatal to it." Padma read, and her face dawned in realisation as she exchanged looks with Neville. "Neville, the roosters of the school have been getting killed off. We saw them once when Neville was doing some extra Herbology assignment for Professor Sprout for extra credit." She added.

"Then the voices that Hilda had been hearing?" Jasper asked, slowly getting excited. If they are right, then they might have found the cause behind all these attacks.

"Hilda's part-vampire." Draco piped in, knowing this little titbit about Hilda and vampires, as he had grown up with her, and had been a regular face at their Samhain Night festivals for years now. "And all vampires are Speakers. It's in their blood, as they are known as the masters of the night for a reason. They can understand the languages of the night – the languages of the non-humans. That's how Hilda can speak to the Siren." He added.

Neville's face dawned in understanding before he frowned. "But if the creature down in the Chamber is a basilisk, then why is it that no one's dead?" he asked. "It is said that all those who looks at it straight in the eye suffers instant death." He pointed his finger at the line that says it.

There was silence for several moments as her friends all stared at Hilda who was silent for several moments, looking at the white wall of the Hospital Wing surrounding them, running her memory over the locations of the attacks.

"Because no one did look it in the eye." Hilda said at last, tearing her eyes away from the wall and turning back towards her friends. "Not directly at least. Colin Creevy, the Gryffindor first year, was always taking pictures, remember?"

All her friends nodded. All of them have seen the excitable Muggleborn Gryffindor first year running around the school taking pictures of any kind imaginable, even the ghosts. Several of the older years were annoyed by the excitable first year however, and more than one of them had itched for an excuse to just destroy that damnable camera, especially when it captured one or two embarrassing moments.

"He most probably had seen it through his camera." Hilda summarized. "It's probably the only thing that had saved his life."

"Lucky kid." Draco snorted, and everyone grinned.

"Justin..." Hilda shut her eyes, trying to remember just what she knew of that attack. "Justin saw it through Nick, the Gryffindor ghost! Nick probably got the full blast of it, but he's a ghost, he can't die again. And Hermione and Cedric..." Hilda trailed off, glancing at the motionless bodies of their two friends. "Had the mirror!" She looked

from face to face, certain that she's right. "Cedric probably had put two and two together after listening to what I had to say, and after reading the text in the library. Thus, he went off to find Hermione. Between the two of them, they have probably figured out that the monster in the chamber is a basilisk, and I bet you anything that Hermione must have been looking around corners with a mirror first, just in case it came along."

Jasper still looked a tad bit doubtful. "And Mrs Norris?" he asked. "I'm pretty sure that she doesn't have a camera or a mirror, Hilda."

Hilda was silent for several moments, trying to recall just what she remembered of the scene that night at Halloween.

The ground of the hallway was flooded with water, and there was even red writing on the wall which looks suspiciously like blood. Hilda took a few sniffs in the air, and she frowned slightly as she recognised that smell for what it was. 'Roosters' blood?' she thought, bewildered.

"The Chamber of Secrets has been opened. Enemies of the Heir, beware'." Jasper read out the writing on the wall, his voice shaking slightly. He had a very bad feeling about this. "It's written in blood."

Hilda's sharp eyes then noted something that none of them had seen right from the start. "Oh no..." Padma gasped as Hilda moved closer to the side of the writing on the wall. "It's Mrs Norris... Filch's cat."

The cat was hung up by her tail, and was extremely stiff.

"There was water on the floor that night." Hilda said at last. "She only saw the basilisk's reflection!"

"Wait, how has the basilisk been getting around the school then?" Padma asked with a frown. "If it had originally belonged to Salazar Slytherin, then it must have been around for thousands of years by now. A basilisk isn't just some small garden snake, Hilda. It can grow up to thousands of feet. A giant snake... Surely someone must have seen it?"

Hilda smiled. "Hermione and Cedric have answered that too," she said, pointing at a single word written just below the text on the

Basilisk in the book. Only Hilda had noticed it because of all the excitement at having found out just what the monster in the chamber is.

"Pipes?" Jasper echoed. "It's been using the plumbing?"

Hilda nodded with a smile whilst Neville looked around warily, half-afraid that the basilisk might just pop up out of nowhere.

"And do you remember what the Siren had told us, that Aragog the Acromantula had told her that the girl who had died fifty years ago had died in a bathroom?" Hilda asked, and her friends nodded, not getting her point. "What if she's never left?"

There was silence for several moments before realisation dawned on Padma. All the girls in Hogwarts School knew of the infamous ghost who haunted the second floor female restroom after all. That is one of the reasons why no girl would ever use the restroom on the second floor. Who would like to do their business whilst listening to some ghost wailing to the high heavens about her untimely death?

"Moaning Myrtle."

"And the entrance to the Chamber of Secrets?" Jasper asked quickly, realising that they might just be onto something big.

"Have you noticed how nearly all of the attacks took place near the second floor restroom?" Hilda asked with a smirk. Her friends blinked in confusion. "Mrs Norris' attack especially was in the exact corridor where the restroom was located. Five Galleons that the entrance is in there."

Draco snorted. Only Hilda would notice that.

"Come on, we have to warn the teachers."

As if on cue, McGonagall's voice spoke over the intercom:

"All students are to return to their common rooms immediately. All teachers are to gather at the second floor corridor."

The five of them exchanged worried looks. "Has there been another attack?" Neville asked worriedly.

"Come on!"

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'How did things come to this?' Jasper thought, wincing internally as he watched Hilda pulled Lockhart by the back of his cloak almost like he is a dog on a leash, not caring in the least that the teacher is at least three heads taller than herself, and kept on stumbling over his own feet to match Hilda's speed. And being a dhampir, Hilda can be pretty fast if she wants to be.

The five friends have rushed to the second floor corridor where the teachers are gathered, only to see a distraught McGonagall telling them that there had been another attack, and with that, the closure of the school. And the latest victim turned out to be the youngest Weasley girl – Ginny Weasley.

Despite knowing that the latest victim who had also been taken down to the Chamber is the daughter of the very family that Hilda would rather stay far away from, she is still pissed with what had happened to Cedric and Hermione, and have all but dragged her friends with her towards the direction of the second floor restroom.

And they would have gotten there unhindered as well, if not for two things.

One, Lockhart was suddenly blasted out of his own classroom via the door flying off its hinges just as the five of them were about to pass by. And two, the ones who had blasted the vain 'teacher' out of his own classroom turns out to be none other than the Weasley twins themselves, grim looks on their faces and wands in hand.

Thus, this caused the current dilemma of having Hilda drag Lockhart like he's some kind of dog with her, nearly choking him, as Hilda's strength is not to be sneezed at, along with the additional additions of the Weasley twins.

"How do you even know where your sister is, anyway?" Jasper asked, annoyed, after having learned just why the twins have insisted on following them and had blasted Lockhart out of his classroom after learning that he is planning on running away.



"Well, let's just say that we have our own ways of knowing where every person is in the school, big or small," said Fred Weasley innocently. "And Gin disappeared after she had entered the restroom on the second floor."

Draco exchanged looks with Padma and Neville. If Hilda is right, and she usually is, then the entrance to the Chamber is indeed in the second floor restroom. The blonde doesn't know just what kind of magical object that the Weasley twins have that could pinpoint the locations of every person in the school, but Hilda had that ability too.

Hilda had explained once that it is more like an 'hawk's eye' kind of thing. It is like she had X-ray vision or something that could look through the castle's walls from above – bird point's view, and she could see the locations of every single person in the castle.

Ethan had jokingly named this ability of hers 'Hawk's Eye'. Draco knew for one that Hilda, like Jessica and Ethan, have a few abilities that had to do with her vampire blood. And like the two adult vampires, her magic ability is powerful.

Padma, Neville and Draco have to jog to catch up to Hilda, as even though the dhampir is the shortest out of all of them, she can be particularly fast if she wants to. Finally, they arrived at the bathroom, and all made their way inside.

Moaning Myrtle, a ghost that must have been a Hogwarts Ravenclaw student when she was still alive – maybe third year or fourth year, was floating around. And like every ghost that they knew in Hogwarts, was pearly white and see through, and she was moaning and wailing to herself.

Hilda kept a tight grip on Lockhart, unconsciously tightening his cloak around his neck, almost choking him and cutting off his air supply. But the dhampir either didn't notice or doesn't care.

"Myrtle." Hilda called out crisply, and Myrtle turned only to see the crowd crowding into her bathroom. She frowned.

"What are you doing here? And this is a girls' bathroom. Boys aren't allowed," she said huffily, causing several jets of water to shoot out and soak the boys, much to their displeasure.

"We want to ask you something." Padma stepped forward next. "We want to know how you died."

Myrtle lit up like someone had just told her that Christmas had come early.

"Oh!" she squealed like a little girl that had just gotten a doll for Christmas, before swooping down in front of the group. "It was horrible! I was hiding in here, crying, because Olive Hornby had been teasing me about my glasses. And then I heard someone come in. But it was definitely a boy, so I opened the stall door that I was in, to tell him to go away, and to use his own bathroom. And then...I died." She finished primly.

"How?" Hilda asked.

Myrtle shrugged. "I only remembered seeing a huge pair of these bright yellow eyes over there, and then I knew no more," she told Hilda, jerking her chin towards the circle of sinks in the corner. "The one right over there." She then floated away.

Without a word, Hilda walked towards the circle of sinks that Myrtle had pointed out, still with Lockhart with her, whilst the rest of her friends followed her. They knew how to tell when Hilda is in a temper or in a bad mood, and she is now definitely in one of the worst moods that they had ever seen. Even worse than the one that she usually had on Halloween. And she looks ready to snap.

Hilda examined the sink for a few moments before she turned back to her friends. Being half-vampire means that she is particularly sensitive to magic and to the changes in nature. Usually more than any human. And she can feel something a little different with just this one sink alone.

"The entrance is here," said Hilda.

"How do we open it?" asked George Weasley curiously.

"How about I go and get some of the other professors and bring them here to help you?" Lockhart offered weakly, trying to get them to let him go, or better yet, to stop this girl from choking him to within an inch of his life.

"Not a chance." Draco said firmly.

"Easy," said Hilda, ignoring Lockhart, walking towards the sink that is the entrance of the Chamber of Secrets and raised a leg before smashing it right into the porcelain sink. Pieces of porcelain immediately flew everywhere, and Neville ducked narrowly as the tap went flying past his head.

"Oh boy..." Padma muttered with wide eyes, seeing what had now remained of the once sink. Where once there is a working sink is now a deep hole that seemed to lead down into nowhere.

"I'll fix it later once we're back up." Hilda told her friends. "So everyone ready?"

Everyone nodded, and the twins had particularly determined looks on their faces.

"Well, looks like you're handling this well all by yourselves, so I'll...just go then!" Lockhart tried to make a run for it by fighting Hilda a lot more furiously than before, but he had obviously underestimated a half-vampire's strength.

"Oh no, you don't!" Hilda growled, tightening her grip on Lockhart's cloak before throwing him towards the entrance of the Chamber of Secrets. The vain man almost fell down it had he not clutched at the nearby sinks, just teetering at the edge of the hole. "You can go down first."

As if on cue, all seven students pointed their wands rather threateningly at Lockhart.

Lockhart looked down the hole and paled considerably, seeing how deep it went. Or rather, the fact that he can't see how far down it went helps to play on his fears.

"You sure that you don't want to go first?" he asked weakly.

"Better you than us." Draco sneered before Hilda helped the professor to make his decision by kicking him into the hole who went down it, screaming like a little girl.

There were a few moments before all seven students heard a loud thud, and a slight groan.

"It's really quite filthy in here," said Lockhart's disgusted voice, and all seven students exchanged identical smirks.

"All right. He's definitely alive. Us next," said Hilda. "Who wants to go first?"

Jasper and the Weasley twins exchanged looks before Fred Weasley stepped up with a shrug, prepared to go down the hole. "Well, someone older has to keep an eye on you ickle little kids, right?" The redhead asked with a grin, tucking his wand into his robes, and going down the hole.

One by one, they went down, with Hilda going after Padma, with Jasper being the last one. As the dhampir stood up and dusted herself off, she then glanced around only to see that they have landed in what seems to be in a stone chamber of some sort – reminding Hilda of the ceremonial chambers that the vampires have for rituals.

Hilda held her nose almost instantly as a strong familiar stench reaches her nose, but ten times worst, though she really shouldn't be surprised, considering just how long that the Chamber has been around. The familiar stench of Death.

"Oh gross. It stinks!" Hilda groaned, still pinching her nose, poking with her toe at some of the bones that were lying scattered around. There must be hundreds, if not thousands of them down here. And by the looks of it, it seems to be skeletons of small animals.

"It does?" came six echoes as everyone looked at her, with Fred and George Weasley careful to keep their wands trained on the vain professor.

"It doesn't smell that bad, Hilda," said Padma sensibly. Hilda gave her a deadpanned look without saying anything, and Padma's face dawned in realisation. "Oh! Oh!"

"Oh dear." Draco mumbled, eyeing the number of skeletons of dead animals that must have been lying down here for centuries, if not millennia, and felt sorry for his poor dhampir friend. It must be torture

for Hilda, especially seeing as how all vampires have enhanced senses, and Hilda's senses are much stronger than the average human.

Hilda who was looking around the tunnel that they were in spotted something long and large ahead of them. "What's that?" she wondered before heading towards it to investigate, with the rest of the group close behind her.

"Is that...some kind of snake?" Padma sounded disgusted as she said so. Snakes, big or little, causes shivers to run up her spine, like they would any girl. Hilda privately wonders how Padma is going to react once they saw the basilisk. She'll probably faint or something.

"No... It's a snake skin," said Jasper slowly. "It must be hundreds of feet long!" He couldn't even see the end of the skin!

"Bloody...hell." The Weasley twins muttered in unison.

Lockhart went pale before he slumped to the ground in a deep faint. The seven students stared at him in disbelief before the Weasley twins snorted in disgust, lowering their wands.

"Some adult he is." George Weasley commented, disgusted.

A small movement from Lockhart's 'motionless' body caught Hilda's attention just then, and her eyes widened. "Fred! George! Don't lower your wands!" she shouted loud enough to deafen all her friends, and seeing as how they're currently in a tunnel, Hilda's shout caused several echoes.

Too late.

Lockhart immediately sprang up and grabbed Fred's wand, the boy who is currently standing the closest to him, turning the wand upon the group of seven students.

"Tough luck, kids," said Lockhart triumphantly. "But the adventure ends here now. I'll just take a bit of this snake skin with me, and tell them that I was too late to save the girl, and that the seven of you tragically lost your minds at the sight of her mangled body." He then waved the wand. "Obliviate!"

Hilda had already moved even when Lockhart had started talking, and positioned herself in front of her friends when the spell had left the wand, waving her left hand, with her eyes glowing a low electric blue – like how it always does whenever she's using her vampiric powers, like all vampires does, even part vampires.

An almost invisible shield surrounded the seven of them just as the spell hit the shield and bounced back, hitting Lockhart and sending him flying backwards, sending him rolling a few paces before he stopped.

Silence.

Hilda moved first of all, taking the shield down wordlessly and moving towards Lockhart, with the rest of her friends behind her. Fred picked up his wand that had been dropped by Lockhart when he was blasted by his own spell, and pocketed it before following his twin and friends. He doesn't wish to lose his Uncle Fabian's wand – he and his twin were both given the wands of their Uncles Fabian and Gideon when they've first started at Hogwarts, the famous Prewitt twins that are also the older twin brothers of their mother.

"Is he...dead?" Neville squeaked even as they approached the professor's motionless body.

Hilda glanced over at her friend. "I doubt that. He didn't cast any harmful spells. The shield that I conjured up only reflects spells. It's a vampire technique – thus it reflects all wizard spells." She added, seeing Padma and Jasper's questioning looks.

Lockhart lifted himself up, and the seven of them fell silent. Hilda noted a glazed expression in the vain man's eyes as he looked around his surroundings and looked at George Weasley who is standing the closest to him.

"Hello," he said dazedly, causing the seven students to exchange looks like Lockhart had just lost his mind. "This is a strange place." He commented with an air that reminds both Padma and Hilda of a certain Ravenclaw first year. Lockhart picked up a rock near him and started playing with it before looking up at George again. "Do you live here?"

George gave him a weird look. "No."

"Who are you?"

George is seriously starting to think that that the spell had seriously addled Lockhart's brains. "George Weasley."

"And...who am I?"

With that sentence, all seven students knew instantly what had happened, and Draco snickered. Lockhart didn't seem to have noticed, as he continued playing with the rock.

"This seems a nice place, doesn't it?" Lockhart asked dazedly.

"Yeah."

George took the rock out of Lockhart's hand and whacked him hard in the back of his head, instantly knocking him out.

"So what now?" Neville asked, turning towards Hilda.

Hilda sighed. "Just leave him here," she said uncaringly, turning away. "It's not like he'll be going anywhere. Let's continue on. Or if you're so worried about him, you can stay here. Your choice."

Her friends all took the smart decision: they chose to follow Hilda.

The chamber was dark, but just like in the Forbidden Forest, Hilda could seem to see where she was going, which she probably could. All that her friends have to do is to follow her, or even just follow the sounds of her footsteps if they can't see her. On and on, they went on, until they came to a stop before a large circular stone door that had snakes decorated on it.

"A door?" Draco frowned. He glanced at Hilda. "Hilda?"

Hilda sighed. "The old-fashioned way of opening a door, huh?" she muttered. "Stand back."

Her friends all wisely backed away as they watched Hilda 'open' the door like how she did the entrance to the Chamber of Secrets earlier. One loud slam, and the stone door went flying inside like it's made

of plastic and not solid stone. It actually crashed loudly against the floor, cracking neatly into half, and causing cracks to appear on the floor where it landed on as well.

As they watched this warily, all her friends silently made a note to themselves to never make Hilda mad. Ever.

Hilda stepped through the now opened entrance, being followed by the others, her eyes flickering here and there as she fingered the pendants hanging from the silver bracelet around her left wrist. Stone snakeheads covered the entire room – forming a pathway straight to the end of the room where there is a gigantic face of Salazar Slytherin, with it reaching from the ceiling to the floor.

And just right in front of Salazar Slytherin's head, near the far end of the room, is a familiar redhead girl.

Ginny Weasley.

"Ginny!" Fred and George cried out in unison, and both took a step to run to their baby sister when a hand that is wrapped around their arms stopped them from running any further. Startled, the two turned back over their shoulders only to see a calculating look on Hilda's face as she narrowed her eyes. "Hilda?"

Hilda said nothing for several moments. "That's not Ginny," she said at last.

"What are you talking about?" George protested.

"Look carefully." Hilda interrupted, still not releasing her holds on the arms of the Weasley twins.

Bewildered, the twins, along with the others, turned back towards the redhead Weasley girl, examining her from head to toe. She seems to be Ginny Weasley all right, so just what is Hilda talking—

"Her eyes." Draco said suddenly. The blonde is more sensitive and observant than the others, thanks to the fact that he had grown up with Hilda. Growing up and seeing vampires and other members of the Midnight Society around him tends to help him hone his observation skills. Especially if he doesn't want to end up as a snack for them. "She has red eyes."



Startled, the others turned back towards the Weasley girl and saw that Draco is correct. Where once Ginny had blue eyes, she now had red eyes. Blood red eyes like that of a vampire.

"Stay here and don't move, no matter what happens. You will be more of a hindrance to me in a fight than of help. This might get a little ugly." Hilda warned them as she walked towards 'Ginny', her movements careful, and her body posture told Draco that she is ready to spring into battle at any given moment.

Finally, when she is about ten paces away from 'Ginny', Hilda stopped in her tracks. "Who are you?" she asked.

'Ginny' smiled and opened her mouth. "It's been a long time, Hilda Evans," she spoke in an eerie double voice that startled all the wizards and witches present. Hilda narrowed her eyes at this.

"...Shans?" Hilda hissed. One of the two vampire twins that have broken out from Tartarus, the prison for the Midnight Society? "Alec told me that you broke out of Tartarus. You're using Astral Speech? You've forced your own consciousness into Ginny Weasley's body, locking her own consciousness away? Why would you do that?"

Astral Speech is a highly difficult and highly advanced technique to perform, even for vampires. It only takes a truly skilled Rune Mistress or Master to perform it. It is a technique that allows the user to force their consciousness into a vessel, allowing them to borrow it to speak through them for several moments. It is a highly draining technique, and as far as Hilda knew, the only ones who could perform this technique at ease are the members of Jessica's clan.

"Well, how else could I attract your attention?" Shans-Ginny smirked.

Hilda growled a low inhumane growl that nearly caused the hairs on their arms to stand for those watching. "Get the hell out of her body," she growled.

Padma and Neville gulped nervously at this, for it was like watching two angry dragons about to attack each other.

"No. Besides, I think someone wants to see you." Shans-Ginny smirked.

Hilda's eyes widened, and she only had a split second as she back flipped backwards a few paces before a pair of daggers clashed at the ground where she had been standing mere moments ago. A beautiful young woman with raven black hair and blood red eyes stood there, dressed in a black bodysuit with a white high collared coat that fluttered around her thighs, with knee high black boots, and black gloves that reaches up to her forearms, secured in place by black satin ribbons.

Hilda narrowed her eyes, getting to her feet slowly. "Lakra..." she hissed. "May Lilith help us... So I was right. You really are back. The attacks on the school... That was you."

Lakra smirked, twirling the daggers about in her hands. "So you knew," she said, phrasing it more like a statement than a question. "Not that I'm surprised. You are one of the three responsible for sealing Orlando away after all."

Back with Draco and co., Jasper bent down, despite knowing that the three vampires (well, one dhampir and two vampires really!), could hear him perfectly well. "Do any of you know what they're talking about?" he asked.

As one, all turned towards Draco who sighed and shrugged. "Ethan and Hilda never really told me much about their vampire business," he said. "Hilda only mentioned once that this 'Orlando' is a mortal enemy of the Midnight Society, and that she had helped in his defeat once when she is a kid. That's all that I know."

"The attacks...is to lure me out, right?" Hilda questioned, and the smirks answered her question. "I'm a little surprised that you didn't start using the basilisk to kill. You sure showed no hesitation back then in wiping out an entire town of humans."

Lakra snorted. "I'm not stupid. If students started turning up dead, the school will be closed," she said. "And I need it to stay open. And yet you didn't do anything despite all the attacks. Thus, I picked the next targets carefully. The two students that always hang around with you—"

"Cedric and Hermione." Hilda interrupted. "I see. So it's all to lure me down here."

"You might be a dhampir, but your vampire blood is still from the Nightwing clan." Shans-Ginny stated. "If two of your friends are attacked, you will want answers. And quickly."

"So you played on that," said Hilda briskly, the last pieces of the puzzle falling into place. "The basilisk?"

"He went without a master for fifty years." Lakra snorted. "You and I both know for a fact that a familiar can never be far from his master, especially a highly magical familiar like a basilisk. It doesn't take much effort to bind him to me. Now answer me, Hilda Evans!" Her eyes glinted. "The rune patterns keeping Orlando sealed... What is the exact sequence of it?"

She sounded almost...mad.

Hilda only raised an eyebrow. "Do I look crazy to you?" she asked blandly. "Do you honestly think that I will tell you? Has six years being imprisoned in Tartarus addled your brains, Lakra?" She tapped at her temple.

Her friends all winced. Hilda must either be very brave to speak to a semi-deranged vampire like that, or she must be very foolish.

Lakra's eyes glinted in rage. "Very well. If you won't tell me, I'll just kill you then! Let's see how well you'll fight against a basilisk, one of the few magical creatures in this world that is capable of killing a vampire!" She snapped her fingers.

And almost like it's in slow motion, the stone mouth of Salazar Slytherin shifted down, thus causing a basilisk to emerge from it. A long basilisk that must be long and large enough to reach the ceiling of this chamber itself.

"Oh shit..." Hilda muttered. "Close your eyes!" She shouted to her friends who all instantly shut their eyes. "Don't open your eyes, no matter what!"

Hilda immediately focused her gaze on the ground instead. Ethan and Jessica have both trained her in combat well enough for her to know how to fight an opponent that she can't look in the eye. And it isn't like she needs her eyes to fight either. The dhampir

immediately yanked off two of the pendants on her silver bracelet, and with a light flash of light, two handguns immediately appeared in her hands.

Lakra looked as if she is about to suffer from a stroke. The deranged vampire immediately focused her gaze to the black choker hanging around Hilda's neck. The dhampir usually had her collar buttoned up, but because of the ride down to the Chamber earlier, her collar had come loose, thus allowing Lakra a fine view of her exposed neck and the black choker around it, with the silver pendant resting just above her collarbone. A pendant that is that of a crescent moon with two blades criss-crossed behind it.

The very symbol of the Midnight Society's hunter militia – those who hunt down the rogue of their kind, and make sure that their kind aren't making a show of themselves. Those who executes the law of their justice system.

"That pendant... It can't be...!" Lakra knew of the power of the Hunters of the Midnight Society. She had spent years running from them before one of them had apprehended her single-handedly after all. "A Hunter?" Hilda only smirked at her, careful to keep her gaze trained on the ground. "How can that be? You're not even—"

"Of age yet?" Hilda finished her sentence. "It seems that six years of imprisonment and over ten years of being a fugitive has caused you to suffer some sort of memory loss, Lakra. You seemed to have forgotten something about our kind. A member belonging to one of the Four Noble Houses will be trained from birth as a Hunter. Ethan did. And Eric definitely did. They both just decided not to join the militia when they are of age, that's all. I might be blood adopted, but I'm still biologically a member of House Nightwing. I am trained to hunt down members of our own kind. Or do you think that it's some sort of exaggeration that I'm able to help seal away Orlando when I was a kid?" She snorted.

Lakra gritted her teeth in fury until even the wizards and witches present could hear her teeth grinding against each other. The deranged vampire knew just how powerful a Hunter could be. They have to be, to be able to hunt down members of their own kind single-handedly.

She turned towards the basilisk. "Kill her!" she shouted, waving one hand towards Hilda.

Hilda immediately turned her focus towards the shadows on the walls of the Chamber where the basilisk's shadow could be seen. She bent down into a crouch before propelling herself into the air just as the basilisk's head struck the floor where she is. Still with her eyes on the shadows on the wall, Hilda raised her handguns and fired two shots at once. The shots got where she wanted them to be – the basilisk's eyes.

The basilisk gave a loud shriek and started thrashing around, even as blood flowed from its eyes.

"Neville, you can look now!" Draco peeled Neville's hands from his eyes, being the only one brave enough to peek a look when the basilisk had shrieked.

Hilda landed lightly on both feet in front of the now blind basilisk, looking up at it. With the basilisk blinded, she can now look into its eyes without fear of dying. The dark haired girl gave a small thin smirk as she looked up at the basilisk who is obviously trying to hear Hilda – to determine where she is right now.

Hilda tightened her holds on her handguns by her sides.

"Come and get me," she said.

That is all that the basilisk needed as it reared its head down onto her, opening its mouth wide with the fangs visible. That is the moment that Hilda was waiting for as she fired two shots simultaneously straight into the basilisk's mouth and snapped her fingers.

The dhampir then took a run for it as fire immediately enveloped the basilisk's body, and the giant serpent shrieked with pain, writhing around on the ground, but to no avail. Soon, it lay still, and the fire continued burning.

Lakra was taken aback as Hilda appeared instantly next to a shocked Shans-Ginny who wasn't fast enough to react as Hilda grabbed the body by the neck and twisted her around so that her hand was at the neck, one arm wrapped around it.

Hilda's eyes shone a low electric blue before she hissed, "Forlate denne kroppen og aldri tilbake! Forvisning! (Leave this body and never return! Banishment!)"

There was a low glow surrounding Ginny's body before it dissipated and Hilda let the body fall limp to the ground before she then turned to face Lakra. A cold hard look appeared in Hilda's eyes as she pointed her gun at the vampire.

"The magic of this school prevents any vampire from harming a student on their grounds," she said simply. "And you know that. That's why you have to resort to use the basilisk to do your dirty work. Leave now, Lakra, and Hogwarts won't pulverise you."

"Hilda Evans, even if you do not tell me the exact rune pattern that keeps Orlando sealed, there are still other ways to free him." Lakra hissed in anger. "He will be back! We will restore him to power! Even the runes that you and Jessica Falsoss used to keep him sealed will not hold for eternity. He will awake soon. One day, he will be back, and you know it!"

Hilda closed her eyes briefly. "The moment man devoured the fruit of knowledge, he sealed his fate. Entrusting his future to the cards, man clings to a dim hope. Beyond the beaten path lies the absolute end. It matters not who you are. Death awaits you'," she murmured. "Nothing in this world is absolute. I knew that the day when I sealed Orlando away. Let him come then, Lakra. I will be ready for him. And for his horde of followers. Even you."

Lakra smirked darkly, glancing over at the witches and wizards over by the corner before turning her attention back towards Hilda. "Half vampire or not, you are still one," she said. "Humans are selfish creatures. And prone to their own destruction. It matters not that you are half human. They only see what they want to see. They might be your friends now, but what happens years from now? When they are old men and women, and you still stayed looking the same – looking like a teenager of seventeen for humans' standards? They will turn on you, calling you unnatural. Your place isn't with humans. Enemy or not, you are still a dhampir – a half vampire. You belong with us, not them. Your path is with the Night."

Hilda closed her eyes briefly before opening them. "I trust them," she said simply. "And what my path will be in the future, that will be something that I'll decide. No one can decide that for me. Besides, Death...is just the beginning."

Lakra smirked. "We'll meet again someday, Hilda Evans. And you can tell Ethan Nightwing to stop his hunts for us. We'll lay low for awhile. But we will never give up restoring our lord to power. He will be back one day."

She then disappeared in a black wisp of smoke.

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The celebration feast held after the entire Chamber affair is noisier than Hilda had ever imagined. And now, the number of Hilda's friends that have gathered at the Ravenclaw table is now eight – two more compared from last year.

The Weasley girl had woken up moments after Lakra had disappeared, taken one look at Hilda, and started a screaming fit that caused Hilda to knock her out immediately with a good sharp knock to the back of the neck. The dhampir had merely stated that 'she's giving me a headache'.

The group of them, with the addition of an unconscious Ginny Weasley who is being levitated by her brother, and with the addition tag-along of Lockhart who had his memory wiped, have headed straight to the Hospital Wing where they found all their Heads of Houses present, along with the Headmaster, as well as the entire Weasley clan, even Bill Weasley and Charlie Weasley.

Hilda had ignored the Headmaster's presence, telling her Head of House everything that had happened, excluding the facts just how she had fought the basilisk, and that the Midnight Society is currently on the brink of another possible war, and that the two vampires involved in this business are actually fugitives among their own kind.

When Dumbledore was all for informing the Ministry about this, Hilda had given him a look and stated that she'll inform the proper authorities for her own kind about this, and if she knew anything about them, they definitely won't appreciate it if the Ministry of Magic

pokes their noses into their business. It is that glint in her eye that told Dumbledore that it might be wiser for everyone involved if he took her 'advice'. He sometimes still had nightmares of the last 'talk' that he had with Elton Nightwing during the war.

Molly Weasley had actually exploded at the end of it, accusing Hilda of being behind the attacks in the school, and for attempting to harm her daughter. She immediately found herself at the ends of the wands of six angry teenagers – two of them her own children. Hilda had actually coolly told Molly Weasley that if she truly wanted to harm Ginny, and she would rather not dirty her own hands harming filth like them, she would never find her daughter's body, no matter how hard she had looked.

Bill had gotten angry at his own parents as well, telling them that without proof, they have no right accusing Hilda of things like that when even the twins have claimed that Hilda had saved their sister's life. And it resulted in half the Weasley clan (Fred, George and Bill) shouting at their parents whilst the other half (Molly, Arthur and Ron) shouted back. Charlie just kept silent, but he didn't look happy with his parents, whilst Ginny was unconscious, enough said.

The end result is that the twins have asked Bill if they can move in with their brother who had recently asked for a transfer to Britain's Gringotts branch for reasons unknown. Bill, being the eldest of seven children, knew perfectly well how kids can get up to, especially how Charlie had been at that age, and was reluctant to allow it, since he was half-afraid he'll come back to a half-destroyed house.

Finally, Hilda who had been listening had finally suggested that the twins stay at Starlight's Hall whilst he is away, and once Bill is back on break, they can then move back in. It helps both sides too, since Starlight's Hall is always short handed, and Hilda could always use some help with the potions that they always need, seeing as how the twins are pretty competent potion brewers.

All the Petrified victims were now cured and sitting, chatting away at their own House tables, with their Housemates filling them in on what had happened. The chattering only got louder when Dumbledore had announced the cancelling of exams as part of the celebration, much to Hermione's dismay.



Finally, after every student and professor was full, Dumbledore had called for bedtime, and had even extended the lights out hour that night, as he knew that the students are bound to stay up way over it.

Hilda tugged onto Cedric's sleeve even as he moved to return to his common room.

"Walk with me?" she asked him, and Cedric nodded.

The two then disappeared silently outside the school grounds, unnoticed by all but their friends who grinned identical grins at each other, and the Weasley twins in particular snickered.

Ron who was glaring over at the Ravenclaw table snorted in disgust before moving off with the rest of Gryffindor House. If his brothers have gone as low as to make friends with a vampire, then they are no brothers of his. His parents are right; befriending a vampire means going Dark as well.

Meanwhile with Cedric and Hilda, both of them walked slowly along the Black Lake, silence befalling between them both. The view of the school grounds is really different from when you see it during the daytime.

"How are you feeling?" Hilda asked at last, turning around and facing Cedric.

Cedric shrugged. "Well, better than when I was Petrified, of course," he said with a grin. "I'm just glad that you solved the mystery. I was wondering what is going to happen if you didn't."

Hilda rolled her eyes. "You and Hermione left behind enough clues," she said. "You both helped to save the school."

"No, we didn't. You're the one who saved the school, not us," said Cedric gently.

Hilda sighed. "I'm not going to argue with you over this," she told him tiredly, and Cedric grinned.

"So what's up? You didn't call me out here just to talk to me about this, right?" he asked curiously.

"Yeah. I'm just wondering... What was it like being Petrified?" Hilda asked.

"Oh. That." Cedric muttered, looking away, and at the waters of the Black Lake. He stayed like that for several moments before turning towards Hilda. "It's kind of like...being in a magical coma or something." He admitted. "I can hear everything. Even feel everything. Like you holding my hand. Or even Jazz making sure that I was comfortable and everything. I can hear everything that you guys were talking about. And even how upset you were over the Petrification." He admitted. "But it's all right. I knew that you would figure it out. And I was right." He then grinned at Hilda. "So Jazz had been telling me about all the crazy stuff that you had been doing ever since Hermione and I got Petrified. He even complained that you dragged them halfway into the Forbidden Forest just to find a group of Sirens."

Hilda was silent for a long time, remembering what Lakra had told her in the Chamber of Secrets.

Half vampire or not, you are still one. Humans are selfish creatures. And prone to their own destruction. It matters not that you are half human. They only see what they want to see. They might be your friends now, but what happens years from now? When they are old men and women, and you still stayed looking the same – looking like a teenager of seventeen for humans' standards? They will turn on you, calling you unnatural. Your place isn't with humans. Enemy or not, you are still a dhampir – a half vampire. You belong with us, not them. Your path is with the Night.

She looked at her hand. No matter even if she is half of one, or even if she had originally been full human before, she can't change the fact that she is part-vampire right now. A member of House Nightwing, one of vampire society's Four Noble Houses.

"I got a question for you," said Hilda, turning towards Cedric who raised a brow. "If I had been human, full human, would you still like me as a friend? Will you still treat me like you would now?"

Cedric was bewildered. "Where did that come from?" he asked, confused.

Hilda shook her head. "Just answer it," she said.

Cedric frowned. "No matter what you are; human, half-human, half-vampire, or even full vampire, you are still Hilda to me," he said gently, taking her hand into his, and examining all the fine points of her finger joints, admiring just how slender and elegant her fingers and hand are, compared to his. "That's all that matters. I can't speak for the others, but I've said this before, Hilda. I don't care what you are. You are you. You are Hilda. That's all that matters. Whether in the present or in the future, my feelings won't change."

Hilda was silent. She isn't stupid, and knew what Cedric is trying to hint to her, trying to tell her. But what else could she do? She can't force him into that life.

"I was...furious when I learned that you were Petrified," she said at last. "I had a suspicion after Justin's attack that it might have something to do with the business that Ethan had disappeared for nearly an entire year for. But when you and Hermione were Petrified, and with what the Siren had told me, it confirms it. Being friends with me poses a risk to your safety, Cedric." Hilda told him, tugging her hand out of his hold. "And the others as well. This time, you were lucky. Lakra didn't want to kill anyone. Even vampires have morals. For those who feed on human blood, we only feed from Donors – willing human volunteers. We never kill them. Most vampires never kill humans. Granted, most of it is because they think humans are below us. But still, the fact is, Cedric, what if Lakra had wanted you dead? You are no match against a fully-fledged vampire. I was only able to chase her away because of the wards on the school. It blocks off most of her power. That's why she has to use the basilisk to do her dirty work. You are lucky this time around, because neither Lakra nor Shans wanted to kill anyone. They just wanted to lure me down to the Chamber. But next time? What if you weren't so lucky next time?" Hilda asked Cedric. "Even me, a dhampir, a half-vampire. Even I can kill you easily if I wanted to, and my strength and abilities aren't as powerful as that of a full vampire. Being around me is a danger hazard, Cedric." She told him seriously. "You should have learned that by now, particularly what had happened last year, and then this year."

"I don't care." Cedric insisted.

"I do!" Hilda exploded, and Cedric was taken aback at her outburst. Hilda tried to calm herself down by taking several deep breaths

before she turned to face Cedric again. "You might not care, but I do! What if something else happens again? What if one of our enemies attacks you again? House Nightwing has enemies, Cedric. And as one of their members, they will target me too. I can defend myself properly. Ethan and Jessica trained me from a young age to be a Hunter. But what about you? Your wizard spells can't always work on a vampire, particularly a full fledged one. What if something bad happens again, and they target you? What if you die? Have you ever thought of that? Or is it that your life, to you, isn't worth living?"

Cedric was quiet for several moments. "I don't know about your enemies and whether I have the ability to fight them off or not," he said at last. "But what I do know is that I don't care about that. I lo—like you, and I want to be with you. And I know that Hermione, Jasper, Draco, Padma, Neville, and even the twins feel the same too." He grinned. "And I like to see you get away from them."

Hilda sighed. "There is no fighting against you lot," she muttered, and she walked towards the edge of the Black Lake. "Another year gone." She murmured. "So much has happened. The events this year reminds me of something Lord Alucard said once: 'The moment man devoured the fruit of knowledge, he sealed his fate. Entrusting his future to the cards, man clings to a dim hope. Beyond the beaten path lies the absolute end. It matters not who you are. Death awaits you'." She glanced at Cedric. "No matter who it is, we can't defy the wheels of fate. Death will always be with us, one way or another. No one lives forever. And immortality..." She sighed. "It isn't a good thing. It's not a good life." She told Cedric. "Come on, let's go back, or the teachers will start hunting us down."

And she moved past him.

"Not a good life..." Cedric muttered, glancing at Hilda's departing back. 'Waiting is always the hardest time in one's life. I see now that there is some truth in it. You treat me as a friend, and I want more. And it hurts, especially if I never know if it'll ever return. And sometimes, waiting can be a burden. But I wanted that burden, because the burden is a person whom I love.'

A/N: Right, pretty angsty chapter. And seriously, I'm kind of afraid of updating my stories now, especially with FF's new policy. I mean, seriously! What are they thinking? We never had that issue before!

So I came across a petition that is currently getting spread around, and it'll help if you guys spread it too!

Anyway, hope you like this new chapter, and please read and review!

Greetings to the fine folk that moderate our site.

Myself, along with many, have been writing and posting on your fine site for years now, some of the better examples of up and coming writers out there are now suddenly finding some of the stories we've come to love at risk of being removed without the chance to even rectify our errors.

For some, that means the permanent loss of a story. While I don't have anything that I believe violates your terms of use, there are those out there that are never able to recover a story in its original form, this is something I find to be almost worthy of a legal action, as while we cannot claim ownership of a character, the stories are OURS and simply destroying them is something that is inexcusable.

It's quite easy to simply add an MA rating, additional filters or even a simple requirement for a free membership to read the stories presented here, and would cut down on hateful anonymous reviews and posts at the same time, so I have to question as to why such a thing, in all this time, simply wasn't added.

If you're worried about falsification of a registration then have an appropriate disclaimer and then there can be no dispute, you took your steps and the PARENTS didn't monitor their children, if that is even your concern. If it is more of a personal view or desire then please at least let people know and give them a chance to remove a story that you and yours find offensive, most people on the site are actually rather cordial when it comes to such requests.

While I cannot say for sure if this letter will even reach those that may be willing to listen, or if it's more akin to a wide spectrum purge in preparation for something bigger, please understand that you are going to be losing a LARGE number of your writers, and thus your income from a lack of readers if there is not some level of action taken to help with this situation.

For those that may agree with this, please feel free to sign on and send this to the support server, maybe we can get some movement on this.

Psudocode\_Samurai

Rocketman1728

dracohalo117

VFSNAKE

Agato the Venom Host

Jay Frost

SamCrow

Blood Brandy

Dusk666

Hisea Ori

The Dark Graven

BlackRevenant

Lord Orion Salazar Black

Sakusha Saelbu

Horocrux

socras01

Kumo no Makoto

Biskoff

Korraganitar the NightShadow

NightInk

Lazruth

ragnrock kyuubi

SpiritWriterXXX

Ace6151

FleeingReality

Harufu

Exiled crow

Slifer1988

Dee Laynter

Angeldoctor

Final Black Getsuga

ZamielRaizunto

Fenris187

blood enraged

arashiXnoXkami

Masane Amaha's King

Blueexorist

Nero Angelo Sparda

Uzunaru999

Time Hollow

fg7dragon

Aljan Moonfire

xXEnergizerBunnyXx

mangopudding

Starian NightZz



## Chapter Twenty: Under the Full Moon

Ethan Nightwing was never so happy to see the familiar sights of Knockturn Alley and Starlight's Hall when he'd returned that night. Beside him, Jessica Falsoss looked exhausted, and no wonder. After all, both of them have been travelling nearly all over the world for the past year in search of the two fugitives that have broken out from Tartarus.

The two vampires have received a message two days ago from the High Council that they have new information about Shans and Lila, and that they'll be sending the Trackers and Hunters after them instead. So will both Jessica and Ethan please stop their search and head home now, since High Lord Elton had been demanding the return of his youngest son.

It was a Thursday night, and the bar wasn't as crowded as it usually is on weekends or even on Friday night. There were a couple of veelas in one corner of the bar, with a haggard looking man who seems to be a werewolf drinking by himself in another corner.

Remus was standing behind the bar counter, mixing some drinks together whilst Sirius was sitting at the bar counter, chatting with his old friend. Hilda was in the seat next to Sirius, head bowed over some books.

"I'm back." Ethan called out as he stepped into the bar with Jessica, the bells tinkling somewhere in the bar.

Remus and Sirius turned around in surprise before they grinned at the vampire. "Well, look who'd just stepped in." Sirius joked. "We've been wondering if you will show your face around here this year."

"Sorry about that. So any problems for the past year?" Ethan asked, shedding his coat and draping it over a nearby chair. Lyra, the head house elf appeared with a light pop, taking Ethan's coat, before disappearing again. Jessica dropped herself into a chair at the bar counter, looking utterly exhausted.

"None so far. Hilda had been helping out since school had let out for the summer a week ago." Remus jerked his chin into Hilda's direction who hadn't said a single word, head bowed over the books which Ethan had just noticed were the account books for the bar.

And the dhampir looked irritated. Whenever either Ethan or Hilda has to deal with the account books for the bar, it is always bound to put them in a bad mood.

"Done!" Hilda announced suddenly, causing the three males to jump slightly. The dhampir closed the books with a light snap, turning towards Ethan. "Welcome back, Ethan. It is about time." She added wryly.

Ethan gave a sheepish grin. "Sorry about that," he apologised. "Eric wasn't happy with me, and had told me as such in his last letter which was sent about a month after Christmas. He wants me back for Ritual Night though. No excuses." He sighed. "I'm probably going to get another earful from him."

Hilda snorted, not feeling very sympathetic towards her guardian. "Well, you shouldn't have taken off like that without a word to anyone," she stated bluntly, and both Sirius and Remus quietly excused themselves. "And it seems like your search is all for nothing however." Ethan raised a curious eyebrow and Jessica who looks close to falling asleep perked up. "Shans and Lila appeared at Hogwarts. They were behind the whole Chamber of Secrets business that I've told you about in my last letter."

Ethan stared at Hilda. "They appeared at the school?" he echoed, and Jessica turned wide awake at that.

Hilda sighed and nodded. "Yeah. I've already informed the High Council about it, and the Hunters and Trackers have been performing a full scale sweep for them."

The Hunters and Trackers both belonged to the militia of the Midnight Society where only the best of the best could get in. Like with every member of the Four Noble Houses, Hilda had been trained to be a Hunter. And if things carry on the way that they are, chances are that Hilda would probably join the militia as a Hunter after finishing school.

"You fought them?" Jessica turned pale at the implications.

Hilda sighed, knowing what both Jessica and Ethan are currently thinking. "Kinda," she admitted. "But the wards on the school reduced their power severely, thus, they have to make use of the

basilisk under the school to do their dirty work. Cedric and the others recovered though. So that's a good thing at least." Jessica glanced at Hilda knowingly.

Ethan almost groaned. "Great. Nearly an entire year of searching, and we have been searching in the wrong direction all this time," he groaned, slumping onto the surface of the counter, too tired to even care about etiquette and conduct.

"Our next order of business will be fixing the runes keeping Orlando sealed though." Jessica pointed out. "With the hunt that we have been on throughout the past year, I simply hadn't had the time to fix it, and half of those seals are damaged pretty badly."

"I understand." Hilda nodded. "Tell me when you want to fix it. Both of you had better get some sleep and then go and feed. You look exhausted." The bell tinkled somewhere in the bar just then, and all three vampires turned only to see a group of goblins walking in, chattering merrily amongst themselves. "I'd better get back to work."

Hilda slipped off the chair that she was on and headed towards the table that the goblins have occupied. For some strange reason, the goblins were never as standoffish and stern with them like they were with others. Hence, whenever Ethan or Hilda headed to Gringotts, they were the first ones that the goblins served, even if there is quite a line waiting ahead of them.

Jessica and Ethan both exchanged looks amongst themselves. "Have you noticed it?" Jessica asked Ethan at last.

Ethan nodded, glancing at Hilda who is currently taking down the goblins' orders. Usually, it is the house elves who take down the orders of customers. But during the non-busy period, Hilda usually does it for some of their customers, particularly the goblins who seemed to have taken quite a shine to Hilda for some unknown reason.

"Yeah. It's about time. Since she's turning thirteen soon." Ethan remarked, turning his attention back towards Jessica.

In the Midnight Society, thirteen is the age for a child to begin their progression to maturity, as that is the age when majority of them receives their first magic maturity, with the age of sixteen being the

coming-of-age. Ceremonies are always held whenever a child of the Midnight Society comes of age. And for the Midnight Society, many of them usually find their other halves when they reached their first magic maturity.

"Besides, we both knew that it is only a matter of time." Ethan commented, looking rather disgruntled. "In all her letters home ever since her first year, Hilda always talked more about Cedric than any other person, even Draco."

Jessica was silent for a long time. "He's her mate, isn't he?" she stated more than questioned. "Her other half." Ethan said nothing, but he looked quite disgruntled in the manner of a father looking rather reluctant to give his daughter up to another man. Jessica groaned. "Ethan, you know that it is only a matter of time before Hilda finds hers. We vampires always do. It is in our blood. Some of us take a longer time to find ours, but we always do find them in the end. Crystal did. Marie as well. Nahuel did too. And so did Alice and Brandon. Even you and me. And Eric as well."

"I know that. But that doesn't mean that I have to like it." Ethan grunted. "And speaking of Eric, he is having his engagement ceremony during Ritual Night, as he is the heir to House Nightwing." He shakes his head. "My brother, having his mate in the form of one of the seven War Priestesses. The War Priestess of Warlock Enhauel. Oh, the irony."

Jessica snickered. The Midnight Society always had battles and wars as part of their culture, and seven of their fiercest fighters – with one for each race were christened with the title of High Warlock, with a War Priestess assigned to each. A War Priestess isn't just skilled with magic, they are remarkably skilled at combat too.

"Yes. Yes." Jessica patted the disgruntled vampire on the shoulder. "But I know for a fact that Hilda is trying to fight it though." She added. "Because he's human. Because she'll outlive him. The worst possible thing for a vampire is to have their mate die before them. And I know Hilda. She will never agree to change him. Not even if he wants to. And Hilda will never forgive us if we do it without her permission."

Ethan was silent. More than anyone else, he knew how headstrong and stubborn that Hilda could be. Once she decides on something,

she'll never change her mind. He had been around for a long time, and like Jessica, he knew a mate bond when he sees one. Because Hilda isn't of age yet, the mate bond hasn't flared for her...yet. But once it does, there is nothing that you can do but just accept it. If one tries to fight it, it will end badly.

"She's a dhampir. She lives in both worlds. Thus, Hilda saw the best and the worst of both worlds. But unlike Hilda back when I'd just found her, Cedric has friends and a family. That's why Hilda doesn't want him to be...well, 'forced' into our world, I guess." Ethan coughed. "Being a vampire means being classified as a 'dark creature'." He made quotations in the air. "Enemies of the state."

Jessica snorted. Along with the rest of the Midnight Society, she knew perfectly well how the Ministry sees them, along with majority of the wizards and witches of England. As long as you're not human or even pure human, they will treat you like some monster. Hilda never said anything, but Jessica had heard enough from Draco and even Hermione that Hilda never had a peaceful day in Hogwarts ever since she had first started there.

"You can't fight a mate bond, Ethan. You know this." Jessica told him. "There is no fighting it. Once the mate bond flares, there is nothing you can do but just accept it. The bond is just too strong. And once Hilda reaches maturity, if she still continues fighting it, it'll do nothing but hurt her. And maybe him too."

"And just who is going to tell her that?" Ethan snorted. "Not me for sure. Besides, you seriously think that Hilda will listen? She isn't the type to follow orders. Well, she does, but she never follows those that she thinks are wrong. She's a free spirit. That's why Father and Eric thinks that Hilda might end up joining the Hunter Militia after she finishes school. The Hunters have similar mindsets as Hilda. Besides, she's old enough to make her own decisions. Leave her be." Ethan sighed. "You know that we don't coddle our young."

Jessica was silent. "Ritual Night is in another week, right?" she questioned, and Ethan nodded. "Hilda is going. And if I know her, she is probably going to invite Cedric along too. With the rest of her friends. High Lord Elton always liked to meet Hilda's friends from school. And then maybe... Just maybe... Eric, Nahuel or even Alec can talk her around on Ritual Night. If it's anyone who could change

her mind, it is them. After all, Alec is bringing his newly found mate there."

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"Ritual Night?" Cedric Diggory asked with a frown as he handed Hilda the pile of dried plates, watching absently as she sorted it into the plate racks according to size and colour. They could always use magic to do it faster, but small jobs like this, when done the 'Muggle way' always allow them to talk.

After his experience with the whole Chamber of Secrets business, Hilda had been very insistent that Cedric do not do any tedious tasks when he'd returned to work at Starlight's Hall. Cedric had tried to argue with Hilda, especially since Starlight's Hall is always at its busiest around this time of the year, but Hilda had told him that either he stick to the less demanding tasks and leave the rest to her, or he stay at home until she is satisfied that he is fully recovered.

Hilda nodded, placing the light blue plates into the racks. "It's Ritual Night in another two days," she explained. "Ethan and I have to be there, so Sirius will be running the bar in our stead, since Remus will be...indisposed on that day." She coughed. "It's like last year, when I'd invited Dray, Hermione, Padma, Neville, Jasper and you along."

"Well, yes, but wasn't Ritual Night held around the middle of July last year?" Cedric wondered.

"Yes. But Ritual Night wasn't based on the calendar." Hilda explained, taking another stack of dried plates from Cedric. "The Midnight Society's most important nights are based on the position of the moon. Ritual Night is always held on the one day of the year when the moon is at its highest. And thus, at it's most powerful."

Cedric paid attention to this. He never learned anything about this in Astronomy class. All they learned in Astronomy were the positions of the stars and the moon, and what it means. He knew enough by now that amongst the Midnight Society, the night is very important for them, especially on nights of the full moon. Hilda often has to help him and Jasper, and even some of the older years in Slytherin and Ravenclaw who has trouble with their Astronomy homework. As Hilda is part vampire, she knew things about Astronomy and the

stars and moon better than anyone else. Except for perhaps the centaurs.

"Well, I guess I can make it. Have you asked the others?" Cedric asked, handing another stack of plates to Hilda.

"Yeah. All of them agreed. It's just... I need to give you a warning in advance though." Hilda finished sorting the plates, and turned around to face Cedric, a serious look on her face. "There...might be some visitors there that might not be...too friendly, for lack of a better word."

Cedric looked confused. "Visitors?"

"Vampires." Hilda corrected. "While part of the Midnight Society, they aren't really part of the 'same group', if you catch my drift." Cedric nodded slowly. "They're from House Farstorm, originally one of the Four Noble Houses in vampire circles."

"Originally?" Cedric looked perplexed.

"They lost that title half a millennia ago when one of their ancestors lost a duel to a member of House Nightwing – that's my clan." Hilda explained. "Amongst the Midnight Society, battles and duels are always part of our culture. Sometimes, at Samhain Nights or even Ritual Nights, duels are held. But in our culture, if a noble vampire belonging to one of the Four Noble Houses was defeated in a duel, his clan automatically loses the title as one of the Four Noble Houses. That title will instead be transferred to the clan of the one who had defeated him. House Farstorm are still noble vampires – purebloods. But they haven't been part of the Inner Circle for a long time now. There are several amongst our group who doesn't like them."

"Why?"

"Things change as time passes." Hilda told Cedric. "During the early days of Lord Alucard, nothing is more important to a vampire than the pureness of blood." Cedric was reminded strongly of a number of pureblood extremists in Hogwarts. "But as time passes, the vampires started dwindling in number because of all the hunts. Thus, to prevent our kind from dying out, several of them started mingling with humans and even with others that not of our kind. These days,

you can only find a few that are known as noble vampires – purebloods. Majority of the vampires these days are either First Generation vampires – humans who are turned into vampires, or even vampires who have some other blood in their family tree. The only clans who are still known as noble vampires today are the Four Noble Houses, House Farstorm, House Evergreen and House Farmark."

Cedric nodded slowly, still not getting it. "So what is the problem?"

Hilda sighed. "House Farstorm has never been a welcomed guest to our Samhain Night and Ritual Night celebrations," she told Cedric. "Usually, they turned High Lord Elton's invitation down, stating that they have their own celebration. But this time around, they accepted it. Thus, things might be a little tense during Ritual Night. House Farstorm is probably one of the few, if not the only vampires that still remains that still believes in 'the pureness of blood' and that humans are our food." She said sarcastically. "We got those occasionally amongst the Midnight Society. But not many of them still believe that. So just stick close to me during Ritual Night if you want to wander around. Alec, a friend of mine who is the High Prince of one of the Four Noble Houses will be around, and Draco, Neville, Hermione, Jasper and Padma will be with him, so they'll be safe."

Cedric nodded. Looks like even the vampires have similar problems that the wizards are facing. Thankfully though, looks like majority of them changes with time, never truly believing in the purity of blood and all that.

"Just...be careful though." Hilda's voice broke Cedric out of his thoughts. "Like Samhain Night, Ritual Night is a night of power. Many of us tend to lose our senses if we smell 'food'. So just stick close to me, Ethan or Jessica, and you'll be safe."

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"Hilda! You're here!"

Hilda was nearly knocked to the ground as a weight suddenly threw themselves onto her back. The dhampir's eye twitched with annoyance as she turned to face a grinning blonde haired vampire with amber eyes wearing black leather and thigh high black leather boots.



"Marie." Hilda growled, ignoring the amused looks from her friends. "Can you get off me? You're not exactly light, you know?" She scowled as a grinning Marie peeled herself from Hilda.

"Have you seen Nahuel, Alice, Johan and Alec around?" Marie asked Hilda, ignoring her last comment.

"Johan and Alice are showing off their mates to the Elders." Hilda rolled her eyes in annoyance, jerking her thumb towards the initial direction of the Elders of the High Council. "Nahuel isn't here yet, and Alec is somewhere around. His father wants to introduce Irene, his mate, to the other clans."

"I should go and take a look at her for myself!" Marie grinned. "See you around, Hils!" She then took off.

"Yeah. Yeah." Hilda rolled her eyes. She then turned to face her friends. "You guys think you can keep yourselves out of trouble for a few hours? I need to see to something." She looked at the perimeter of Ritual Night where the ritual is to take place, where several women were busy setting it up, along with a few of the males.

"Well, Ethan's here." Jasper pointed out, pointing at Ethan who is talking to his father and brother, who had a beautiful dark haired woman standing next to him, dressed in a black outfit suited for battle, with a white cloak over it. "We'll be fine."

The preparation actually took longer than Hilda had anticipated, and by the time that she was done, she is ready to collapse, since preparations for Ritual Night or Samhain Night always takes lots of magical power. Hence the reason why many people are always involved in the perimeter preparation.

As it is, Hilda took refuge by one of the trees, massaging her temples, taking a quick breather before heading back in and joining her friends.

"Rough night?" said a chuckling voice, and Hilda turned only to see a grinning Alec Silverstein next to her.

"Where's Irene?" Hilda asked with a raised brow, since Alec hasn't been seen without his mate by his side that night.

"Marie is showing her around, introducing her to the others." Alec explained. "Nahuel is with your friends, so don't worry. He knows the importance of keeping them safe, since they're here as guests, not Food. Particularly since House Farstorm is here." He sighed. "Why must they be here?" He grumbled. "Especially tonight, since so many of us have brought our mates."

"It can't be helped. They accepted the invitation, and we can't turn them down without risking conflict." Hilda told him.

Both fell silent for several moments before Alec spoke again. "Dray told me what happened at the school," he told Hilda. "Hilda, how much longer are you going to deceive yourself? How much longer are you going to continue fighting the bond? For now, it's fine. As you haven't reached your first maturity, let alone being of age. But once you hit your first maturity, and the mate bond flares, then it's going to be almost impossible to fight it."

"I don't intend to accept it." Hilda said stubbornly. "He doesn't belong in our world, Alec! You know that. He's human. He doesn't belong here. With us." She gestured about herself. "We face more dangers than we ever wanted to ever since we're fledglings. If he's dragged into our world too, he will have to face it too. And idiots like House Farstorm."

Alec sighed. "Hilda, it's better to have loved, than not having loved at all," he told his friend. After all, he's not stupid. He could see from a mile away just what is happening between his friend and that caramel haired boy that she'd brought with her at the last Ritual Night. "The mate bond is a soul fulfilling wonderful thing. It completes us." He gestures with his hands. "Completes our soul."

Alec had never really gotten the whole 'completes us' thing whenever the topic about mate bonds and progressing into adulthood had come up. His father only sees fit to embarrass him whenever the whole talk about the 'birds and the bees' comes up. It is only when he had found his mate Irene at his school, Nightshades, that he understood what the adults had meant.

Irene had been a vampire, though unlike Alec, she isn't a noble. And unlike some of the other females that Alec knew like Hilda, Marie and even Alice, Irene deals more in illusions. When he had first met

her at his school, and the mate bond had flared, he had thought that meeting Irene was the best thing that had ever happened to him. Everything just seems so much brighter and happier. He cherished every moment that he had spent with Irene, and simply adores her and even the ground that she stands on. And likewise, Irene loves him dearly too. Her gentle smiles are always reserved only for him.

For the Midnight Society, especially the vampires, a mate bond between two individuals completes their souls when they find their other halves and completes the whole mate bond process. It is a beautiful thing. A sacred thing.

It is just unfortunate that Hilda...

"...But not when your other half is a human." Hilda retorted. "Humans are just so fragile. At the school, I was just...this close to losing him, Alec." She placed her index finger and thumb so close together that they were almost touching. "And if she had wanted to, Lakra could have killed him easily. Unlike me, she is a fully-fledged vampire, with her powers at full maturity. And she had Shans with her. But she didn't. And it's knowing that that pisses me off!" Hilda growled. "Just being around me is a danger hazard. It's already dangerous enough being my friend. What's more if he's my mate?"

With that, Hilda then spun around and walked away from the site of Ritual Night, heading deeper into the woods like how she had always did when she was younger, and never really had to participate in Ritual Night.

Alec sighed, glancing skywards to look at the night sky that was dotted with millions of stars that night, shining like diamonds on black velvet. "There is no fighting a mate bond, and you know that," he whispered. "Vampires live on forever until Time claims us. Hence, the Night Goddess Hekate gives us a companion to keeps us company until that time. You can do nothing but just accept the mate bond. It is what makes us vampires as part of the Night Society."

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Cedric Diggory was staring, awe struck, at the sight of the night skies whilst perched halfway up a tree in the forest that surrounds the site where Ritual Night is currently taking place. He could never see sights like this at Hogwarts, and even where he lives. The night

skies in the Great Hall at Hogwarts are enchanted, and not really part of nature.

"Cedric?" said a confused voice somewhere below him, and the caramel haired teen blinked and looked downwards only to see Hilda standing on the forest bed below him, staring up at him in confusion. "What are you doing out here?"

"I need a breather." Cedric admitted. "Want me to come down? Or do you want to come up?"

"Stay still for a moment," said Hilda as she leapt to the lowest branch that she could reach, leaping upwards easily, standing on the branch with both feet, before she started leaping from branch to branch like some ninja that Cedric had seen only once in a Muggle television program. Finally, she reached the branch that Cedric is sitting on, and sat down next to him.

"It's beautiful. The night skies." Cedric commented. "I've never noticed it until now, but we could never see night skies like this at Hogwarts, and even at our houses."

"For some reason, only the lands blessed by the earth could have sights like this." Hilda told him. "The night skies that you could see from Starlight's Hall is beautiful, but nothing compared to this."

They both stayed in silence for several moments before the sudden explosions of fireworks lighting up the skies startled them. Hilda laughed from next to Cedric, her laugh sounding like twinkling bells to him. "So it's started, huh?" she mused, a small smile on her lips. "Whenever one of our kind brings their newly found mate during Ritual Night, fireworks will be lit at the end of it. It symbolises a new beginning to their life, and the blessings by the Elders and the Gods above that they will stay together until the end of time."

"I know that I've thought about this before, but vampire culture is really interesting." Cedric commented. Hilda smiled, but said nothing, watching the fireworks appear and disappear. Just faintly, they could hear the cheers and voices of the Midnight Society from the site where Ritual Night was held. "Once before, you'd asked me if I will still treat you like a friend if you had been human, right?" Cedric asked suddenly, and Hilda turned towards him, perplexed. "At that time, I said that I don't care about your enemies, thinking that I will

fight them off if I have to. My thinking at that time... I was half serious."

Hilda was silent for several moments. "I'm sorry."

"Why are you apologising?"

"If it weren't for me, Lakra wouldn't have—"

"It wasn't your fault." Cedric interrupted. "I'm not stupid. Because I'm human, I'm more fragile than anything. We die easily after all." He grinned at Hilda. "From diseases, accidents, even wars and battles. You hadn't had a day of peace since you entered Hogwarts. But no matter what anyone say or even what you say, I still want to stay by your side." Hilda said nothing. "So Hilda..." Cedric turned to look straight at Hilda. "I..."

Hilda covered his lips with her right hand, her bangs shadowing her eyes. "Say no more," she told him. "It is true that I hadn't had a day of peace ever since I entered Hogwarts. But I remained because the friends that I'd made there are important to me. Likewise, you are important to me too. But I..." Hilda's lips trembled.

Alec sighed. "Hilda, it's better to have loved, than not having loved at all," he told his friend. After all, he's not stupid. He could see from a mile away just what is happening between his friend and that caramel haired boy that she'd brought at the last Ritual Night. "The mate bond is a soul fulfilling wonderful thing. It completes us." He gestures with his hands. "Completes our soul."

Cedric smiled. "It's all right. I understand," he said. "I'll wait until you are ready." Another loud explosion of fireworks caught his attention. "Wow! Now if only they have this in the wizarding world too." He mused.

Hilda smiled a small smile.

Make my wish come true  
Let darkness slip aside  
Hiding all our hope  
Mocking what we treasure

Battles we can win

If we believe our souls  
Hang in for the light  
'Till dawn

Fate will not leave you  
Hate will not heal you  
Pray and one day  
Peace shall flow everywhere

How much longer are you going to continue fighting the bond? For now, it's fine. As you haven't reached your first maturity, let alone being of age. But once you hit your first maturity, and the mate bond flares, then it's going to be almost impossible to fight it.

Hilda closed her left hand slowly into a fist as she stared up at the 'magical fireworks'.

Of everyone in the world, why him? Why a human? Can't I ever be normal? Leave him be. Leave him alone! He doesn't belong in our world, and shouldn't even come near it. Just... Why him?

Hilda looked up into the skies, but she received no answer.

Chp21